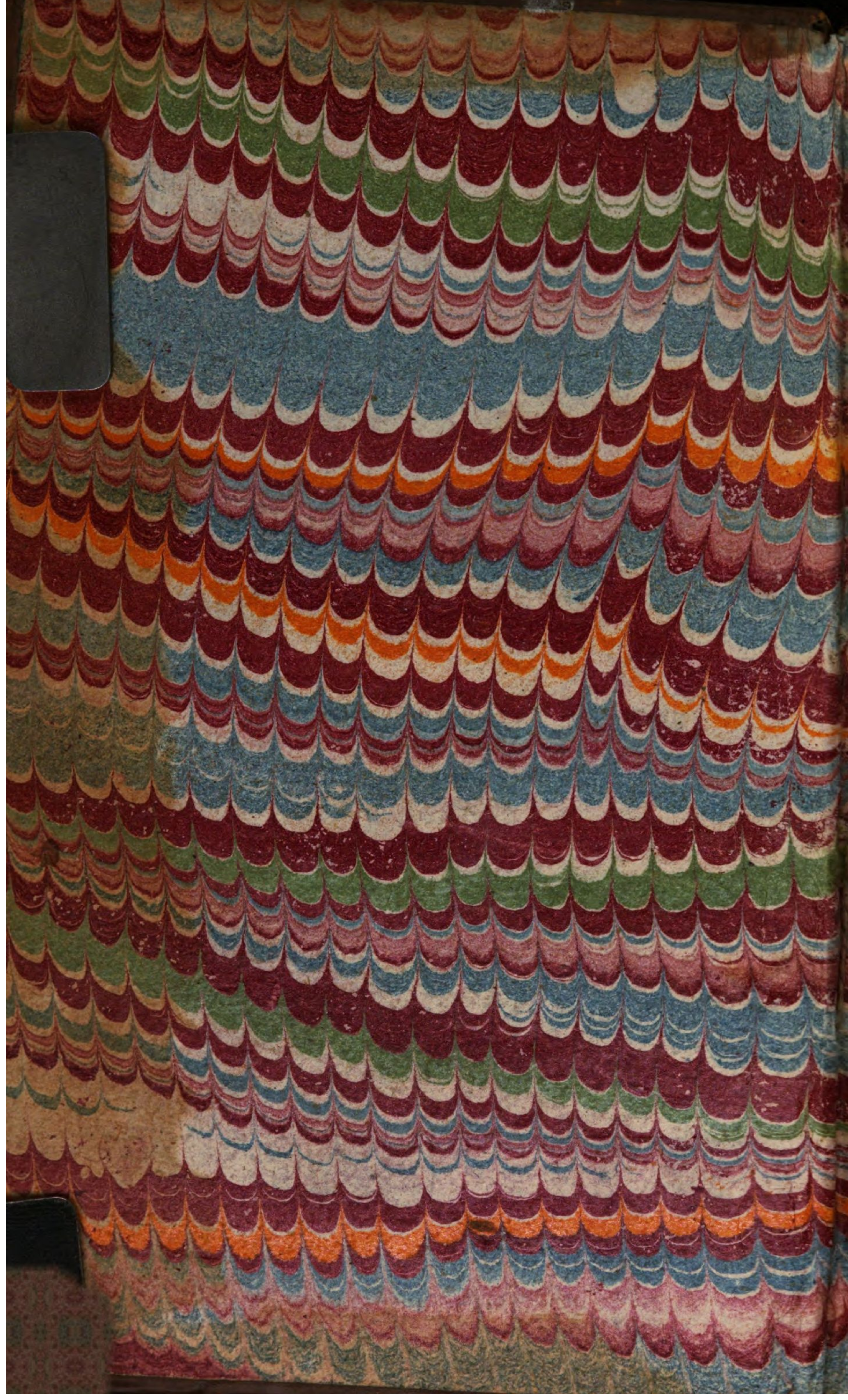








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PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES

Upon the
EPISTLES and GOSPELS
for all the Saints-Days thro-
out the Year.

VOL. IV. PART III. and Last.

To which are added,
Two DISCOURSES on *Constancy* and
Perseverance in the Christian Faith.

By MATTHEW HOLE, D. D.
Rector of *Exeter-College* in *Oxford*.

1 Cor. XIV. 12. latter part.
Seek that ye may excel to the Edifying of the Church.

L O N D O N :

Printed by J. D. for T. VARNAM and J. OSBORN in *Lom-
bard-street*, W. TAYLOR at the Ship in *Pater-noster-Row*,
H. CLEMENTS at the Half-Moon in *St. Paul's Church-yard*,
and J. BROWNE without *Temple-Bar*. M.DCC.XVI.

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PRACTICAL

Upon the

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Rector of Exeter-College in Oxford.

LONDON: Printed by J. GALT, 1725.

See that ye may excel in the knowledge of the Church.

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Printed by J. D. for T. VAN NISSEN and J. OBERN in
St. Pauls Church-yard, W. TAYLOR in the Strand
near the Horse-church, and J. BROWN in White-
hall.





To the Reverend
Dr. B O O T H,
Dean of **BRISTOL.**

Reverend **SIR,**



YOUR Restoring the Order and Decency of publick Worship in the Cathedral Church of *Bristol*, at a time when it much needed it, and in a manner that well became it; hath inclin'd me to send abroad this Excellent Part of our Liturgy under the Auspicious Influence of your Protection: being not only an eminent Example,
A 2 but

iv *The* DEDICATION.

but a great Encourager of True and Regular Devotion.

The Subject of the ensuing Discourses contains a brief Account of the Lives and Actions, the Deaths and Sufferings of the Holy Apostles, and other eminent Saints; who being the first Planters and Propagators, and therefore the prime Props and Pillars of the Christian Faith, are fitly recorded in the Annals of the Church, and justly deserve a yearly Commemoration.

This short Account of these worthy and excellent Persons, is taken not so much from the obscure and imperfect Fragments of Ecclesiastical or Profane History, as from the more Infallible and Authentick Records of Sacred Writ; the sundry Portions whereof selected for that purpose, are here briefly explain'd and apply'd to the Use and Benefit of all well-meaning Readers.

I know the Reverend and Learned Dr. *Cave* hath highly obliged the World this way, in his excellent History of the Lives and Acts of the Holy Apostles: And
the

The DEDICATION. V

the Worthy Mr. *Nelson* hath mightily assisted the Devotion of well-disposed Persons on this Subject.

What is here added, is to recommend the Virtues of these Saints to our Imitation, to set before us the best Patterns of Piety, Patience, and Perseverance in our Holy Religion, and to stir us up to follow these undaunted Forerunners in the Faith; that so treading in their steps, we may arrive at last to the same happy End : which is the hearty Wish and Prayer of,

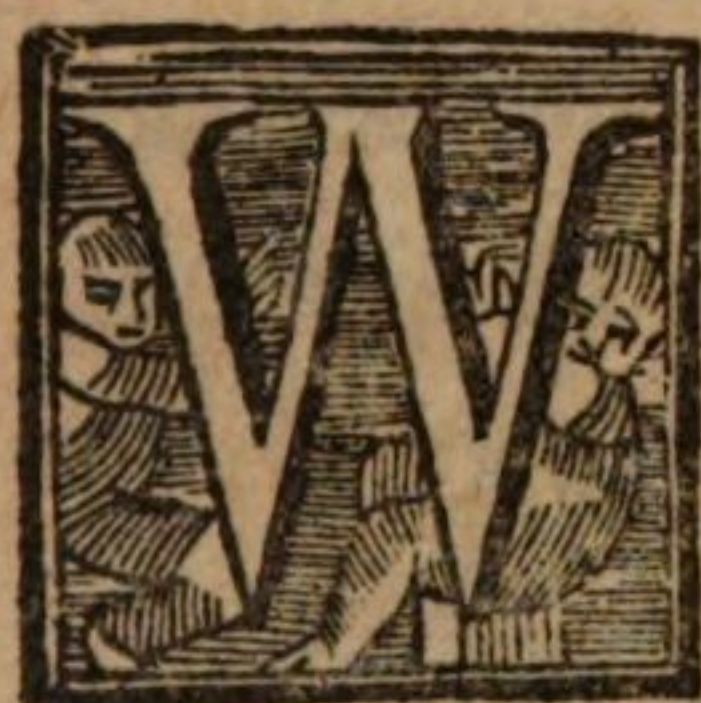
S I R,

Your humbly Devoted Servant,

MATTHEW HOLE.



THE PREFACE.



WHEN our Blessed Saviour had gathered his Apostles and Disciples, and call'd them to the Work whereunto he design'd them, he acquainted them with the Difficulties and Discouragements they might meet with in his Service, saying, Behold ! I send you forth as Sheep among Wolves, to be worry'd and persecuted by them. This he did to prevent Surprize, and to prepare them for the worst that could happen : adding withal this Advice, Be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves ; either by a prudent flying, where it might be, or a patient suffering, where it could not. Administring likewise this Cordial, that tho in the World they might have Tribulation, yet they should be of good chear, for he had

over-

overcome the World, and would make them more than Conquerors over all their Enemies.

To this end, after his Resurrection from the dead, he constituted and settled the Christian Church, which he had purchased with his own Blood, committing it to the Care and Government of his Apostles, with a Promise to be with them and their Successors to the World's end.

After his Ascension into Heaven, he sent down the Holy Ghost with all its Gifts and Graces upon them; endowing them with Power from on high, to disciple all Nations, and instruct them in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven: And being then assembled at Jerusalem, from thence dispers'd themselves into all Parts and Quarters of the World, to plant and propagate the Church of Christ; watering it with their Blood, which prov'd the Seed of the Church, from whence God was pleas'd to give it a mighty and wonderful Increase, by daily adding to it such as should be saved.

Now since all Scripture is said to be written for our Learning, and the Lives and Actions of the Apostles and other Forerunners in the Faith are recorded in it for our Example; it will be our Wisdom and Duty to set them as Patterns before us, and to transcribe the Copy of their Virtues into our own Lives. And because Examples draw stronger than Precepts, the Church hath piously appointed some Days in the Year, to be set apart to preserve the Memory of these Saints, to rehearse their good Works, and to recommend their Examples to our Imitation: And

to that end, hath selected several Portions of Sacred Writ, relating to their Lives and Sufferings, to be read and remember'd by us on the Days of their Celebration.

I know some frivolous Objections have been started by Sectaries and Innovators against the Observation of such Days; but being abundantly refuted by the universal Consent and Practice of all Christian Churches in all Ages, are better to be pass'd away in silence and oblivion, than to be reviv'd and honour'd with any solemn or solid Confutation: especially considering, that the observing of these Saints Days is not with any Design of praying to or worshipping of them, but only to praise God for them, and the Graces that shined in them, to honour their Memories, to recount their Virtues, and to stir us up to be Followers of them, as they were of Christ; that by following them in Grace here, we may e'er long follow them to Glory.

Farewel.



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PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on*
all the Epistles and Gospels for
all the Saints Days throughout
the Year.

The THIRD PART.

DISCOURSE I.

The EPISTLE for St. Andrew's Day.

Rom. x. 9, 10, to the end.

If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus,
and shalt believe in thine Heart that God hath
raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved.
For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteous-
ness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto
Salvation, &c.



HAVING discours'd of all the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels, that are appointed for every Sunday throughout the Year; I proceed next to those that follow, which are appointed likewise for all the other Holidays of the Year: wherein we commemorate the Lives and Actions of the Holy Apostles, and others mention'd and remember'd in Holy Scripture.

And because *St. Andrew* was the first that came to Christ upon his first Appearance, and follow'd him before any of the other Apostles, bringing *Simon Peter* and others after him, as we read *John* i. 38, 39. therefore he leads the Van of this noble Army of Martyrs, and has the honour of having his Day first solemniz'd, and his Memory celebrated in the Service of the Church. Accordingly,

The Collect for the Day recommends his Example to us, and teaches us to pray to *Almighty God*, who gave such Grace to his Holy Apostle *St. Andrew*, that he readily obey'd the Calling of his Son *Jesus Christ*, and follow'd him without delay; that he would likewise grant to us all, that we being call'd by his holy Word, may forthwith give up our selves obediently to fulfil his holy Commandment, through the same *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

St. Andrew, for his Birth, was the Son of *Jonas* a Fisherman in *Bethsaida*, a City in *Galilee*, situate on the Banks of the Lake of *Gennesareth*, where he continu'd to exercise his Father's Trade, till Christ call'd him from it, and from catching of Fish made him a Fisher of Men.

At the Dispersion of the Apostles into the several Parts of the World, to preach and propagate the Gospel, *St. Andrew's* Province was the Country of *Scythia*, and neighbouring Countries round about it: where passing through *Cappadocia*, *Galatia*, and *Bithynia*, he instructed and converted many to the Christian Faith. From thence he went to *Constantinople*, where he taught and settled the Christian Religion; and after that, he is said to have founded a Church there for Divine Worship, and ordain'd *Stachys*, whom *St. Paul* calls his beloved *Stachys*, first Bishop of that Place.

After this, he pass'd over *Thrace*, *Macedonia*, *Thessaly*, and *Achaia*; where he preach'd the Gospel with great success, converting great numbers to the Faith, and confirming his Doctrine with many Signs and Wonders; till at last he came to a City call'd *Patra* or *Patras* in *Achaia*, where he turn'd many from Paganism to Christianity, and there gave his last and great Testimony to it: the Manner whereof, as 'tis recorded by the Church-Historians, was briefly this.

Ægeas the Proconsul of *Achaia* coming to *Patra*, where *St. Andrew* then was, and finding great Multitudes by his Preaching fallen off from the Worship of their Gods, and turn'd to Christianity, was highly incens'd with the Apostle
and

and People, and endeavour'd both with Kindness and Threats to bring them back again to their old Idolatries. But the Apostle still confirming them in the Faith, and perswading the Proconsul to embrace the same, so highly enrag'd the Proconsul, that nothing could appease his Fury: which was the more increas'd, because, as *Nicephorus* tells us, the Apostle had converted his Wife *Maximilla*, and his Brother *Stratocles*, by a miraculous Cure of some desperate Distempers upon them, which no Physick could remove. Whereupon the incens'd Proconsul commanded him to do sacrifice to his Gods, or else he should be put to the same death upon the Cross, which his pretended Saviour underwent. To which the Apostle reply'd, That he rather desir'd than declin'd that Honour, for Christ had consecrated the Cross by his Sacred Body's hanging on it; and that he was willing by that Instrument to go to him.

The Proconsul finding he could prevail nothing upon him, either to renounce his own, or to embrace his Religion, committed him to Prison; from whence the enrag'd People would have rescu'd him, had not the Apostle's Intreaties restrain'd them, wherein he beseech'd them not to hinder him from receiving the Crown of Martyrdom. Upon which words, he was presently haled away from the Prison, and being scourg'd by seven Lictors, he was led away to the Cross; which was somewhat different from that of our Saviour's, being two Pieces of Timber crossing each other in the middle, in the form of the Letter X: to which he was not fasten'd with Nails, as our Saviour was, but ty'd with Cords, to make his Death the more lingring. However, after the offering up his Prayers to God, and exhorting the People to Perseverance in that Faith which he had deliver'd to them, he resign'd up his Soul unto God; and in the space of two days gave up the Ghost.

This is a short Account of the Life and Death of St. *Andrew*, the Saint of this Day; for whose undaunted Courage in confessing the Lord Jesus, and Constancy in believing in him, the Church hath selected this Portion of Scripture to be read as the Epistle for this Day, which begins thus: *If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine Heart that God hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.* Where we have,

First, The Duty of every Christian, which is to *confess with the Mouth*, and to *believe in his Heart the Lord Jesus*. And,

Secondly, The Reward or Encouragement annex'd to so doing, which is Salvation; for if thou do so, *thou shalt be saved*.

The Duty is double, part whereof relates to the Mouth or Tongue, which is to confess the Lord Jesus; and part to the Heart, which is to believe his Resurrection from the Dead.

For the first, To confess with the Mouth the Lord Jesus, is to own and adhere to him in times of greatest Danger and Persecution: so did the Saint of this Day, and so did the other Apostles, who boldly confess'd Christ before their Heathen Governours and Persecutors; and no Threats of Imprisonment or Death it self, could make them deny or shrink from him. Of this is that of our Saviour, *Whosoever shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven; and whosoever shall deny me before Men, him will I also deny before my Father in Heaven.* Mat. 10. 32, 33.

The other part of the Duty, is to believe in the Heart the Lord Jesus, and that God rais'd him from the Dead. Without this, the Confession of the Mouth will be of no avail; for 'tis not enough to say with the Tongue, that Christ is the Saviour of the World, but we must firmly believe it in the Heart, so as to receive his Doctrine, obey his Precepts, and hold fast the Profession of this Faith without wavering. And in so doing, we shall surely be sav'd by him; which is,

Secondly, The Reward here annex'd to it, and is great enough to encourage us at all Times and in all Extremities to adhere to him: for the great End of our Faith, and Consummation of all our Hopes, is the Salvation of our Souls; which if we obtain by a stedfast Belief in him, and a constant abounding in the Work of the Lord, we shall find to our comfort that our Labour will not be in vain in the Lord. To which end, let our Heart and Tongue go together in confessing, and our Mind and Mouth in believing in the Lord Jesus, and then the End will be everlasting Life: for *with the Heart Man believeth unto*

unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.

This the Apostle goes on to confirm from God's Word, in the next Verse: *For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.* The words are taken out of *Isa. 28. 16.* where God is said to lay in Zion a Corner-Stone and sure Foundation: which tho some may stumble at, as the Jews did, yet *they that believe and trust in him, should not make haste*; that is, should not so hastily go out of the way, as to be put to shame by it, for the words in the Original signify both. So *St. Peter* quotes it, *Behold I lay in Zion a chief Corner-Stone, elect and precious, and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded*; *1 Pet. 2. 6.* In the same sense *St. Paul* renders it, *Rom. 9. 33.* where he speaks of our Saviour as a *Stumbling-Stone and Rock of Offence* to some, but *whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.* The Word is diminutive, and signifies that he shall be so far from being put to shame and confusion of Face, that he shall have whereof to glory and rejoice in. And this Glory and Salvation is not confin'd to a few only, but extends to all that thus confess and believe on him; for *God is no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation he that feareth him and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him*; *Acts 10. 34.* And the same is affirm'd here by our Apostle: *For there is no difference (saith he) between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him; for whosoever calleth upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved*: meaning, that God hath now no more regard to the Jews, tho once his peculiar People, than he hath to the Gentiles; but all that constantly confess, pray, and adhere to Christ, shall be Partakers of that common Salvation purchas'd by him.

Now the Apostle's mentioning the calling upon God as a necessary Condition of Salvation, occasion'd two or three Objections with relation to the Jews and Gentiles before spoken of.

The first is, *How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believ'd?* This Question relates to the unbelieving Jews, who could not call upon Christ, or receive any benefit by him, for lack of Faith or Believing in him; and so were left in a desperate and forlorn Condition.

The second is, *How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?* This Question relates to the Infidel Gentiles, who not hearing of Christ, and the

6 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON

Sound of the Gospel not reaching their ears, were destitute of the Means of attaining to Faith or believing in him; and so were to be pity'd and pray'd for, that the Light of the Gospel might shine unto them.

The third Question is, *How shall they hear without a Preacher?* How can they hear or learn any thing of Christ, or the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, without ſome Miniſters or Meſſengers to teach and inſtruct them? Having none but Idol Priests, that keep them in darkneſs, they muſt be ignorant and unacquainted with theſe Divine Truths.

Laſtly, 'Tis ask'd, *How ſhall they preach, except they be ſent?* that is, they muſt be duly call'd and commiſſion'd by God, as the Prophets of old, and the Apoſtles ſince were, before they may preſume to take the Office of Teaching upon them, or deliver Meſſages of the Mind of God unto the People: for we read of the falſe Prophets, that they ran before they were ſent, and God complains of ſome who came in his Name and he ſent them not. So that a lawful Call and Commiſſion is requiſite to qualify Perſons for the Work of the Miniſtry; and then we may ſay, *as it is written, How beautiful are the Feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad Tidings of good things?* By which it appears, that calling upon God, believing in Chriſt, and hearing of the Word, from Perſons duly authoriz'd and appointed to preach it, are all neceſſary Links in the Chain of Man's Salvation: for *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*; and both lead in the way to eternal Life.

But for a farther Answer to the Objection of the Jews, the Apoſtle adds, that *they have not all believ'd the Gospel*, for *Iſaias ſaith, Lord who hath believ'd our Report?* meaning, that if all to whom the Gospel is preach'd, would receive and obey it, they could not fail of being ſaved by it; but the great fault is, that many will not be perſuaded to believe and embrace it, and ſo thruſt Salvation from them: for *Iſaias* foretold long ſince, of many of the Jews, that they would not believe the Report made to them of the glad Tidings of the Gospel, and ſo were caſt off for their Infidelity.

Now to clear the Juſtice of God in rejecting his antient People the Jews, the Apoſtle tells them, that no Means requiſite to their Salvation were withholden from them; but on the contrary, they were all plentifully vouchſafed to

to them : and nothing but their own obstinate Refusal of them, could have brought so heavy a Judgment upon them.

Because hearing the Word preach'd by Persons sent by God for that purpose, is a necessary Means of Faith and Obedience, therefore he asks the Question, *ver. 18. I say, have they not heard the Word thus preach'd? Yes verily* (saith he) *their Sound went into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World.* They had many Warnings from the Prophets, and they had the Gospel preach'd to them by the Apostles in every City, according to Christ's Command, *Acts 1. 8.* but they turn'd the deaf ear to them all, and would not hearken to any of their Admonitions. Again,

Because the Knowledg of their Duty and their Punishment were necessary to inform and awaken them, he again asks the Question, *ver. 19. I say, Did not Israel know these things?* Yes, they could not be ignorant of them ; for *first Moses saith, I will provoke you to Jealousy by them that are no People, and by a foolish Nation I will anger yo. .* *Moses* foretold this in the 32d Chapter of *Deuteronomy*, that they having mov'd God to Jealousy by that which is no God, meaning, their preferring Idols before him ; he would provoke them to Jealousy by them that were no People, (that is, by preferring the Gentiles before them) and make them angry to see, that they whom they accounted a foolish Nation should be taken in their stead, and become more favour'd of God than they.

Moreover, saith he, *Isaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after me.* The words are extant in *Isa. 65. 1.* where the Prophet brings in God Almighty declaring, that he was call'd upon by the Gentiles, that were before Strangers, when he was neglected by his own People the Jews : and therefore they, meaning the Gentiles, shall have the Gospel preach'd unto them.

But to Israel he saith, All the day long I have stretched out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying People: meaning the Jews, who are often call'd a *stubborn and stiff-necked Generation, a perverse People* ; whom therefore God cast off, and turn'd to the Gentiles.

This is the Drift and Design of the Epistle for this Day, from whence we may learn many useful and important Lessons : As,

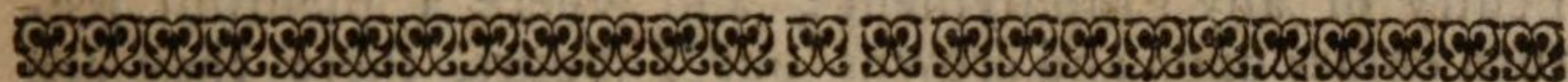
8 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON

1. We may learn hence, not only to believe in our Heart, but to confess with our Mouth the Lord Jesus, in times of greatest Danger and Difficulty : so St. *Andrew* the Saint of this Day did, and so we are all commanded to do. The Love of Christ should prevail above the Love of this World, and that will carry us through all the Troubles and Tribulations we may meet with in it. The Way to Heaven is sometimes beset with Briars and Thorns, and through many Tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God, which will for ever cease when we come there. Let us not then be so discourag'd by these Difficulties, as to desert or draw back from the Ways of Righteousness ; for *if any draw back (saith God Almighty) my Soul shall have no pleasure in him.* Yea, he is so far from taking pleasure in Apostates and Revolvers, that he will *punish them with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.* Wherefore let us not be in the number of those that *draw back unto Perdition, but of them that believe to the Salvation of their Souls ;* that so by owning and adhering to Christ here, we may be for ever own'd and accepted by him hereafter.

2. This Epistle teaches us to call upon the Name of the Lord, and to hear his most holy Word from Persons duly sent and authoriz'd to preach it to us, which are here made the necessary Means of Salvation : *How shall they hear (saith the Apostle) without a Preacher ; and how shall they preach, except they be sent ?* Where, as Hearing is made the Duty of the People, so is a Commission requir'd in the Preacher : and therefore our Saviour directs us to beware of false Prophets and Teachers, that intrude into this Sacred Office, and run before they are sent. The Priest's Lips preserve Knowledg, and the People are to seek the Law at his mouth ; and no man is to take this Honour to himself, but he that is call'd of God as was *Aaron.*

Lastly, We are taught by this Epistle to beware of Infidelity, and to *take heed, that there be in none of us an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.* We see the Jews were rejected of him for their Obstinacy in not believing in Christ, and the Gentiles were receiv'd into Favour for accepting of him as their Saviour, and believing in him. Let not this then be our Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and we love Darkness rather

rather than Light, because our Deeds are evil ; but rather let us close with the Terms offer'd by him in the Gospel, and then we shall receive the End of our Faith, even the Salvation of our Souls.



DISCOURSE II.

The G O S P E L for St. *Andrew's Day.*

St. Matth. iv. 18, 19, &c.

Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two Brethren, Simon call'd Peter, and Andrew his Brother, casting a Net into the Sea, for they were Fishers : And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you Fishers of Men ; and they straightway left their Nets, and follow'd him, &c.

TH E S E Words are the Gospel for this Day, in which we have a further Account of St. *Andrew*, whose Memory we now celebrate. And in it I shall observe,

First, St. Andrew's Trade or Course of Life before he became an Apostle, and that was a Fisherman.

Secondly, His Call to the Apostleship ; Jesus saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you Fishers of Men.

Thirdly, His ready Obedience to his Call ; He straightway left his Net, and follow'd him. I shall speak to each of these, and for a Close recommend the Example of this Saint to our Imitation. I begin,

First, With St. Andrew's Trade, Occupation, or Course of Life before he became an Apostle, which, the Text tells us, was the Trade of Fishing ; and so was his Brother Peter's, whom our Saviour saw casting their Nets into the Sea, for they were Fishers. A Profession very mean and servile, attended with perpetual Labour and Difficulty, exposing those that follow it to the Severity of Winds and Weather,
and

and the Hardships of Cold and Hunger; neither are their Days only spent in continual and restless Labour, but their Nights too in tedious and oft-times unsuccessful Toil: *We have toil'd all Night (saith St. Peter) and caught nothing.*

Gain indeed doth very much allay and sweeten the Difficulty of any Employment; and where a plentiful Return ensues upon and crowns our Labours, there they are not only sustain'd with Patience, but pursu'd with Diligence and Delight: but where a Calling consists chiefly in Toil, with little or no Recompence, where the most unweary'd Pains and Care bring in but a slender and inconsiderable Return, that Employment may be well enough reckon'd base and servile. And such we know is the Trade of the Fisherman, who endures the roughest Storms of the Day, and the blackest Tempests of the Night, with very small Gains to requite his Labour.

This was the Profession of St. *Andrew* and St. *Peter*, who were a Couple of poor mechanick Fishermen, that knew little more than how to cast their Nets into the Sea, and spent their time only with the mute and silly Fish; and yet these were the Persons whom our Saviour thought fit to make choice of for his Disciples and Apostles. Which may teach us,

1st, That there is no Profession or Course of Life so low or despicable, as to exclude any from the Favour of Christ, or the Grace of the Gospel. These two poor Fishermen, Sons of *Jonas*, were selected by the Son of God, to be the chief Attendants on his Person, to hear his Doctrine, and to be the Eye-witnesses of his Miracles. Meanness, it seems, is no bar in God's Way, nor any Hindrance from his Service; the Poor, the Unlearned, and Ignoble are not despis'd by him, who is no Respector of Persons: yea, if there be any Difference, he seems to be more fond of the Poor and Humble, than of the High and Honourable; our Lord himself appear'd in the Garb of Poverty, and chose such only for his Retinue. Indeed he seems to have a more peculiar regard for the poor Profession of Fishermen, than any other; for beside the two Brethren, *Andrew* and *Peter*, the following words tells us of two other Brethren, *James* and *John*, the Sons of *Zebedee*, who were likewise call'd from their Nets to the Office of Apostles, and from taking of Fish were taught to catch Men. So true is that of St. *Paul*, *Not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are call'd*; 1 Cor. 1. 26. And elsewhere

where he is said, *to have chosen the Poor of this World to be rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Let none then be troubled at the Meanness of his Calling and Condition in this World: Our Saviour himself disdain'd not to be a Carpenter's Son, and during the thirty years he spent in a private Life, he is said to have wrought at his Father's Trade. His Followers consisted only in a Train of Fishermen and Publicans, two very abject and despis'd Stations in the World; but it matters not how low they seem in the Eyes of Men, whilst they rise so high in the Esteem of Heaven: and God having so highly honour'd the meanest Persons and Professions, there can be no reason for any to be discontented at the Lowness of his Condition.

But why did our Saviour make choice of such mean Persons, or weak Instruments to carry on so mighty a Work? Why, this was done, that the whole Work might appear to be the sole Effect of a Divine Power and Wisdom, that *no Flesh might glory before him, but he that glorieth should glory in the Lord.* Had our Saviour taken for his Apostles the most accomplish'd Orators and Philosophers of the World, who, by their profound Learning, might have unfolded the deep Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, and by their charming Eloquence have insinuated these Truths into the Minds of Men, it might have look'd like a human Contrivance, and the Instruments might put in for a share in the Glory of the Atchievement. But when Men altogether illiterate, and destitute of all the Arts of Persuasion, being neither polish'd by any ingenuous Education, nor furnish'd with any of the Ornaments of Speech, are sent abroad to run down the Wisdom of the World, to baffle the finest Notions and Speculations of the greatest Philosophers, and make them all veil to the Simplicity of the Gospel; this shews it to be entirely the Work of a Divine Power, that went along with it, and none else can claim any share in the Honour and Success of the Undertaking: for none sure can suspect any subtle or crafty Designs in ignorant Fishermen and Mechanicks, who had never seen or learnt any of the Arts of Sophistry; nor could they propose to themselves any worldly Advantage in following him, who call'd upon them to leave all that they had, at their first coming to him.

In a word, nothing less than the Power of God could make the Foolishness of Preaching triumph over all the
+ Wisdom

Wisdom of the Wise, and cause the plain Simplicity of the Gospel to prevail more than all the Tongues and Pens of the nimblest Orators. For this our Saviour thank'd his Heavenly Father, who had hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and reveal'd them unto Babes, that is, to Men of weak Capacities and mean Understandings. And St. Paul speaks to the same purpose, saying, *That God hath chosen the foolish things of this World to confound the Wise, the weak things to confound them that are mighty, the base things of the World, and things despis'd, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are; 1 Cor. i.*

From St. Andrew's Trade and Profession, which was that of a Fisherman, I proceed,

Secondly, To his Call to the Apostleship, in these words; *Jesus saith unto him, Follow me, and I will make you Fishers of Men.* This Phrase, *Follow me*, was the constant Form used by our Saviour in calling his Disciples: Thus St. Matthew was call'd from the Receipt of Custom, in the same words, *Follow me*, Mat. 9. 9. from which time forward, he left his Publican's Stall for the Office of an Apostle; and from a Servant of Mammon, became a Follower of Christ. Thus St. Andrew here, and Peter and Philip, and the Sons of Zebedee, were all call'd in the same Form, *Follow me*.

The Import of which Phrase was, That they should sequester themselves from all the Cares and Encumbrances of the World, to attend his Person, to hear his Doctrine, and to behold his Miracles; to the end that they might be able to teach and instruct others: for they were to be Instruments and Ministers to propagate the Christian Church, which he had planted, to sow it with the good Seed of sound Doctrine, and, if need be, to water it with their Blood.

To fit them for this great and eminent Service, our Saviour singled them out to be his Disciples and Companions, instructing them himself in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, establishing them in the Belief of his being the true Messiah, and confirming all his Sayings with unquestionable Miracles.

To attend this great Work, he bid them quit all other Employments, and follow him: And lest they should object the Necessity of providing for their bodily Sustenance, he bids them not to be solicitous about those things, and not to carry with them any Purse or Scrip, for they should find

find a peculiar Providence to attend them wherever they went.

Neither would he have them meditate beforehand what they should say, for it should be given them from above; from whence they should receive that Wisdom, which their Adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist. This was the Sense of Christ's bidding his Disciples to follow him, which St. *Andrew* and the other Apostles punctually observ'd. And here it will not be amiss to take notice of two things, *viz.* The Time when they were call'd, and the Work whereunto they were call'd. For the

1st, The Time when our Saviour call'd St. *Andrew* and his Brother *Peter*, was when they were honestly and diligently employ'd in the Business of their Vocation: for we read here, that they were casting their Nets into the Sea for a Draught, when Christ came by and bid them follow him. And the next Verse tells us, that the Sons of *Zebedee*, *James* and *John*, were busy in the Ship mending their Nets, when Christ call'd them. God approves and encourages a pious Industry in the Works of our Calling, and loves to honour and bless those whom he finds well-employ'd. He pass'd by those idle Drones that indulg'd to Ease and Sloth, without casting in any thing to the Stock of the Publick, and liv'd only upon the Spoils of others. Such as neglect the Work that they are already set about, are not fit for higher and better Employment; but instead of being trusted with more Talents, forfeit those they have already. In short, Idleness is the Devil's Way and Opportunity of plying them with Temptations to do his drudgeries: whereas the diligent employing our selves in the Duties of an honest Calling, is God's way, wherein he delights to meet us with his Blessings and Benefits. From the Time of Christ's calling them, pass we,

2^{dly}, To the Work whereunto he call'd them; and that was, to preach the Gospel to all Nations, and to publish the glad Tidings of the Kingdom of Heaven: A glorious and honourable Employment, which the Son of God thought worthy of his coming from Heaven to promote, and therefore none of the Sons of Men may think it beneath them to propagate. *Follow me* (saith our Saviour) *and I will make you Fishers of Men*: which is as if he had said, "Lay aside your Nets, which serve only to inclose the silly Fish; I have other and greater Work for you, which is to catch Men, and to bring in Profelytes to
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“ the Kingdom of Heaven. Doubt not of the Success, for
 “ I that command Sea and Land will make you Fishers of
 “ Men : You shall not want Skill or Ability for this Ser-
 “ vice, for I will furnish you with Baits strong and power-
 “ ful enough to draw in all that will take hold of them.
 “ Say not, Who is sufficient for these things ? for my
 “ Grace shall be sufficient for you ; I will make the Work
 “ to prosper in your hands, and you shall see of the Travail
 “ of your Souls and be satisfy’d.” This was the Work
 he call’d them to, and this was the Encouragement to fol-
 low it. He did not leave them to spread their Nets in
 vain, or to toil day and night and catch nothing ; but he
 promis’d to be with them, and secure to them the Success
 of their Labours. By which they became so expert in
 this spiritual Art of fishing for Men, that they brought in
 whole Shoals of Converts to the Christian Faith, and daily
 added to the Church such as should be saved. From whence
 I proceed,

*Thirdly, To St. Andrew’s and St. Peter’s Obedience to
 the Call ; They straitway left their Nets, and follow’d him.*
 Where two or three things may be worthy of Obser-
 vation. As,

(1.) The exceeding great Promptness and Readiness of
 their Obedience ; for they no sooner heard Christ’s Voice
 in calling to them, but they presently left their Nets and
 follow’d him : they staid not to consult Flesh and Blood,
 nor demurr’d about what they might lose or suffer in fol-
 lowing him, but without any more ado they immediately
 obey’d his Call and follow’d him. Christ’s Word had such a
 quick and powerful Influence upon them, as to silence all
 Disputes, to alter the whole Course of their Lives, and to
 make them leave all to be his Disciples : which may teach
 us to do the same, to make haste and delay not the time
 to come to him, knowing that we wander in every step
 we go from him, and that we never walk aright but in
 following of him.

(2.) We may observe here, not only St. Andrew’s Rea-
 diness to come to Christ himself, but his forward Care and
 Diligence to bring others to him : for no sooner had he
 discover’d the Messias, but he presently ran and told his
 Brother Peter, that he had seen the Messias, and willed
 him forthwith to go to him ; *John* 1. 41, 42. He was not
 content to be happy alone, but being fully satisfy’d of the
 Truth

Truth of his Person and Doctrine, was willing that others should partake with him of the Benefits of both. Real Virtue and Goodness are ever diffusive and ready to communicate; and, like the Sun, do not enclose, but impart their Light. Our Saviour's Advice to his Disciples, was, that being converted themselves, they should strengthen their Brethren. Accordingly we find, when *St. Matthew* had left his Publican's Stall to follow Christ, he invites many of his Fellow-Publicans to do the same; who thereupon became his Disciples and Followers. *Philip* being call'd, immediately goes his way, and finds out *Nathanael*, and brings him to our Saviour, to be one of his Followers. And the Apostles, upon the Receipt of the Holy Ghost, dispers'd themselves into all Quarters of the World, to teach and disciple all Nations, and to proselyte Persons every where to the Christian Faith: So zealous is true Piety for the Good of others as well as our own, and so willing to further the Salvation of all Men.

(3.) We may observe here, not only *St. Andrew's* Readiness to follow Christ, but his Constancy and Perseverance in keeping with him. Having laid aside his Nets, he return'd no more to them, but kept close to our Saviour, for whose sake he had left all things else. He follow'd him in Bonds and Imprisonment, yea and Death it self; and nothing could allure or affright him from him. We read indeed of some that follow'd our Saviour only for the Loaves, and staid with him as long as any thing could be gotten by him; but when that fail'd, they forsook him, and walk'd no more with him; *John* 6. 66. But the Saint we remember this Day, was none of that number; for he was so far from valuing the things of this World, that he left all he had in it to follow our Lord, nor could any Offer of earthly things tempt him to relinquish him. He kept with him as well in the roughest Storms of Adversity, as in the clearest Sunshine of Prosperity: He could behold the Rack, and other Instruments of Cruelty, with an undaunted Courage, and rather courted than declin'd any Sufferings for his sake. When the Governour of *Achaia* threaten'd him with the Cross on which his Master suffer'd, he rather rejoic'd than repin'd at it; being as willing to follow him in his Death, as he had been in his Life. He was so far from being afraid or asham'd, that with *St. Paul* he glory'd in the Cross, which Christ had hallow'd with his own Flesh; And so with great Cheerfulness and
Mag.

Magnanimity mounted to Heaven the same way that his Lord led him.

Thus died the Saint and Martyr of this Day a happy and glorious Death, which soon crown'd him with endless Bliss and Immortality.

The Application of this Discourse will lie in recommending to your Imitation the Example of this great and eminent Saint; exhorting you to tread in his steps, and to be a Follower of him, as he was of Christ. To which end, let us first imitate the Readiness of his Obedience, who immediately obey'd the Call of Christ without delay. In like manner, let us who are call'd by God's holy Word, forthwith give up our selves obediently to fulfil his holy Commandment.

Next, Let us shew the same Zeal and Forwardness in calling others to Christ, as St. *Andrew* did in bringing *Peter* and others to him. This will shew us to be endu'd with such a truly Christian Spirit, as is tenderly affected towards the Good and Salvation of Mankind.

Lastly, Let us imitate his Constancy and Perseverance, in holding out with our Saviour to the end; and learn from him by no Terrors or Temptations to be drawn from him. This is the best way of celebrating the Memory of the Saints, viz. by recounting their Virtues, and stirring up to Imitation: And then by doing as they did, we shall go to the same place where they are gone; and by being faithful unto Death, we shall with them receive a Crown of Life: which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.





DISCOURSE III.

The EPISTLE for St. *Thomas's* Day.

Ephes. ii. 19. 20, to the end.

Now therefore ye are no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God; and are built upon the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-Stone, &c.

THE Saint we are to commemorate this Day, is St. *Thomas*, of whose Parents and Kindred we find no mention in Holy Scripture, nor does Ecclesiastical History give any Account of them; only one Author, and he of no great Credit, *Simeon Metaphrastes* by Name, tells us, That he was born of mean Parents, and brought up to the Trade of Fishing, but had afterward a very liberal and ingenious Education. How this can consist with the Meanness of his Parents, or upon what this Account of his is grounded, does not appear elsewhere.

However, that he was a Jew is certain, and, as some conjecture, a *Galilean*; that he was among the rest called to be one of Christ's Disciples, and reckon'd in the Number of the Apostles, the History of the Gospel plainly declares.

That he bore a true Love and Affection to our Saviour, and was willing to live and die with him, appears from that Passage in *John* II. 16. where, when Christ had determin'd to go into *Judæa*, to raise his beloved *Lazarus* from the Dead, the other Apostles dissuaded him from going thither, because some of the Jews had threaten'd, and a little before had attempted to stone him; but *Thomas* boldly said to them, *Let us also go, that we may die with him*: Which shew'd the Constancy of his Mind, in adhering to him both in Life and Death.

When the Apostles were sent abroad to plant and propagate the Christian Faith, the Province assign'd to St. *Thomas* was the Country of *Parthia*, where he converted many of the *Medes* and *Persians*, with others of the neighbouring Nations; and passing thro *Aethiopia*, he came at last to *India*, where he preach'd the Gospel with that wonderful Success, that great Numbers of that Heathen and barbarous People chearfully embrac'd the Christian Faith every where.

Among the rest, he converted one *Sagamo*, a Prince of the Country, whose Example was soon follow'd with the Conversion of Multitudes of his Kindred and People; by which means Churches were erected among them, and a sort of Christians, call'd by the Name of *St.-Thomas-Christians*, were settled there; a Succession of which is remaining in those Parts to this day.

Now because St. *Thomas's* Preaching was chiefly among the Heathens or Gentiles, many of whom he turn'd from the Darkness of Paganism to the Light of Christianity, and from the Power of Satan unto God; therefore the Church hath selected the Portion of Scripture read to you for the Epistle for this Day: In which we may observe,

First, The great Favours and Privileges granted to the Gentiles, by their being receiv'd into the Christian Church.

Secondly, A Description of the Church, by the Similitude of a House or Building. And,

Thirdly, A short Account of the Unity and Stability of the Church. Of each of these something briefly and particularly. And,

First, Of the great Favours and Privileges bestow'd upon the Gentiles, by their receiving the Christian Faith, in these words; *Now therefore ye are no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God.* The Apostle had been just speaking of the calling in of the Gentiles, who were before afar off, and excluded by a Partition-Wall from the Privileges of the Temple; and what a mighty Change was made in their Condition, by their embracing the Gospel; that things were quite otherwise with them, and very much for the better since their receiving of Christ and his Holy Word: for *in times past* (saith he) *they were without Christ, being Aliens from*

from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers to the Covenant of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World. This was the sad and forlorn State of the Gentiles, who were in a hopeless and helpless Condition; and such is the natural State of all Men: but now in Christ Jesus (saith he) they who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the Blood of his Cross; for he is our Peace-maker, and by breaking down the middle Wall of Partition, that was between the Jew and the Gentile, hath made us all one in Christ Jesus. And having abolish'd the Enmity, and reconcil'd both into one Body, we may thro him have Access to the Father by one Spirit.

And *now therefore* (saith he) we who are descended from the Race of the Gentiles, *are no more Strangers and Foreigners*; for Strangers are wont to be kept at a distance, and are not admitted to the free Access of Children and Kindred. But we may come boldly to the Throne of Grace, and have receiv'd the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry *Abba, Father*. Neither are Foreigners admitted to the Privileges and Immunities of Natives and Citizens; but *we* (saith the Apostle) *are Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God*: We are admitted to be free Denizens of the heavenly City of *Jerusalem*, and made Members of the Church of Christ there.

Our being made Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, is meant of our being made Partakers of the Grace and Favour of God in common with the Jews, who were *separated from other People to be holy unto the Lord*, as we read, *Lev. 20. 24.* And being God's peculiar People, sever'd from other Nations to be his, they had many peculiar Privileges granted to them above all others: for *to them appertain'd the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the Giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises*; whose *were the Fathers, and out of whom, as concerning the Flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever*; *Rom. 9. 4, 5.* These were great and invaluable Privileges, which belong'd to them and no others; for *in Jewry was God known* (saith the Psalmist) *and his Name was great in Israel*; *at Salem was his Tabernacle, and his Dwelling in Zion*: *He shewed his Word unto Jacob, and his Statutes and Ordinances unto Israel*; *he hath not dealt so with any Nation, nor have the Heathen Knowledg of his Laws.* *Psal. 147. 19, 20.* But the Son of God, who had the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for his Possession, hath en-

larg'd these Privileges, and call'd the Heathens to the Participation of them ; insomuch that Gentiles as well as Jews, who by the Preaching of Christ and his Apostles embrace the Christian Faith, are taken into his Family, become Members of Christ's Church, and are of the Household of God. From whence *St. Paul* here takes occasion,

Secondly, To describe the Christian Church by the Similitude of an House or Building : In which three things are considerable ; the Builder, the Foundation, and the Superstructure.

For the first, The Building of a House requires the Head of an Artificer to contrive it, and the Hands of Workmen to finish it. *Every House* (saith the Apostle) *is made by some Man, but he that made all things is God.* The whole World is God's House, and all things in it owe their Being to the Operation of his Hand. *We are all his Workmanship* (saith the Apostle) *ye are his Husbandry, ye are God's Building.* 1 Cor. 3. 9.

But of the Christian Church 'tis more eminently and particularly said, that its *Builder and Maker is God* : He is the sole Founder of this spiritual House, and alone bears up the Pillars and Parts of it ; 'twas his own right Hand that planted this Vineyard, and 'tis that too that waters, and gives it all its Encrease. And having found the Author and Founder of this spiritual Fabrick, let us,

Next, Consider the Foundation on which it is laid, or that bears it up ; and that is the Doctrine or Faith of Christ, who is the great Master-Builder and Finisher thereof : so we are here told, that the Christian Church, and all the Members of it, *are built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-Stone.* Not that the Church is built upon the Persons of the Apostles and Prophets ; for then they being mortal, and long since dead, the Church must likewise have decay'd and perish'd with them : but upon the Doctrine deliver'd by the Prophets in the Old Testament, and by the Apostles in the New ; the principal Subject whereof is Christ, who is the only true and real Foundation, and as it were the Corner-Stone ; in which consists the chief Strength of a Building, binding the two Walls together, which are the two Nations of the Jews and Gentiles, of which the Church is compos'd ; and bearing off the Violence of Storms and Tempests, that are more dangerous at the Corners of Buildings,

Buildings, than at any other Part. Accordingly we find God declaring in sundry other Places, *Behold, I lay in Zion a chief Corner-Stone, elect and precious, and whosoever believeth in him shall not be confounded*; 1 Pet. 2. 6. And here Christ is call'd the chief Corner-Stone, that binds and fastens the Building; and the Apostles and Prophets join'd to him, and preaching Faith in him, are said to be the Foundation that sustains or upholds it: so that Christ is properly both the Founder and Foundation of the Christian Church; and his Apostles and Ministers are said to build thereupon: *For other Foundation (saith St. Paul) can no Man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*, 1 Cor. 3. 11. who is therefore said to be the Foundation of all other Foundations.

But here we may note, that the Church is said to be built upon the Foundation of the Apostles; not of St. Peter alone, as the Church of Rome would have it, but upon that Faith, of which he, as the chief of the Apostles, made Confession in the Name of all the rest; and so is built upon them as well as he. And consequently his Supremacy and Infallibility above the rest, is built upon none, or a very bad Foundation.

Next to the Founder and Foundation of the Church, we are to consider the Superstructure, or what is to be rais'd upon it: And here the Apostle gives a Caution, *Let every one take heed how or what he buildeth thereupon*; 1 Cor. 3. 10. for some build upon this Foundation, *Wood, Hay and Stubble*, and other combustible Matters, that is, Errors, Heresies and Divisions, which cannot abide the Test, but will be consum'd at the fiery Trial; and such (he tells us) *will suffer Loss, for his Works will be burnt, and he himself shall be saved so as by Fire*, that is, with much Difficulty; ver. 15. And therefore he wills us to build upon it *Gold, Silver and precious Stones*; that is, sound Doctrine, and the good Actions of a Holy Life: for these will stand the Trial and Examination of the last Day, and bring us to an ample Reward, ver. 14. From whence I proceed to consider,

Thirdly, The Stability of the Church, which is here said to be a *Building in or upon Christ, so fitly fram'd together*, as to gain Strength and Firmness enough to stand and continue to the World's End: for we are told elsewhere, that he hath founded it upon a Rock, and promis'd, that *the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against it*, so as utterly to destroy

destroy or extirpate it ; *Mat. 16. 18.* He hath not, with the foolish Builder, built his House upon a sandy Foundation, where every Storm of Persecution would expose it to fall and ruin ; but he hath fix'd it upon such a strong and immovable Foundation, as to be able to bear the shock of the roughest Tempests, and to stand firm amidst all the Batteries and Opposition of its greatest Adversaries : so that we may safely rely upon it in times of greatest Danger and Difficulty, and build the Hopes of Salvation upon it.

And because Union gains Strength, and Stability is founded upon Unity, therefore the Apostle leads us, in the next place, to consider the Unity of the Church, which he saith, *is a Building so fitly fram'd together in Christ, as to grow unto an Holy Temple in the Lord* : meaning, that as the Temple of old was but one, so all Believers together make up but one Temple of the Lord ; and that Jews and Gentiles, how distant soever they were formerly, are now so closely united and knit together in Christ, as to constitute one Christian Church, to which they all belong, and in which they are to adore and worship God together. Now this Unity of the Church consists,

1st, In the Unity of the Head, which is Christ : for as the Church is said to be *one Body*, *Eph. 4. 4.* so is Christ said to be the *one Head* of that Body, *Col. 1. 18.* for tho a Body may have many Members, yet being all join'd to one Head, they are but one Body ; even so the Church may consist of many Congregations, but having but one Head, they all make but one Church, united to Christ as the Head, and to one another as Members, *Rom. 12. 4, 5.* In which sense the Apostle tells us, there is but one Lord to direct and govern it, *Eph. 4. 5.*

2^{dly}, The Unity of the Church consists likewise in the Unity of the Spirit, *There is one Body, and one Spirit* ; for as one Body hath but one Soul to quicken and enliven it, so the Church is animated and actuated by one Spirit, even the Holy Spirit of God, who is in it by his Presence, over it by his Power, and thro it by his Providence : So we read, *By one Spirit are we all receiv'd into one Body, and made all to drink of one Spirit* ; *1 Cor. 12. 13.*

3^{dly}, The Church is one by an Unity of Faith, there being but *one Faith*, or *Form of sound Words*, profess'd in it, *Eph. 4. 5.* and that is the Apostle's Creed, which contains all the fundamental Points of Doctrine necessary to be believ'd

liev'd in order to Salvation, and is that *one Faith once deliver'd to the Saints*, which we are requir'd to *hold fast the Profession of without wavering*, Jude ver.3. Heb. 10. 23. And when all the Members of the Church consent and agree in this Harmony of Doctrine, than are they one by an Unity of Faith.

4thly, The Church is one by the Unity of the Sacraments, which are the Bond or Ligaments to hold all the Parts of it together : *There is one Baptism*, saith the Apostle, Eph. 4. 5. by which we are all baptiz'd into one Body ; *whether we be Jews or Gentiles, Bond or Free, Male or Female, we are all one in Christ Jesus* ; Gal. 3. 28. And we being many, are one Bread and one Body, eating the same spiritual Meat, and drinking the same spiritual Drink. By which we are united together in one Fellowship and Communion. And,

Lastly, The Church is here said to be one by the Unity of the Foundation, being *built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-Stone*. For as a House built upon one Foundation, tho it may have many Rooms and Apartments, is but one House ; even so the Church, being built upon one Foundation, tho it have many Congregations for the Convenience of Worship and Discipline, is yet but one Church ; in which we also are builded together for an Habitation of God thro the Spirit : that is, being thus united in Christ, we are built up as so many Temples of God, in which he is pleas'd to reside as an Inhabitant, and to communicate the Influences of his Grace and Presence by his Holy Spirit.

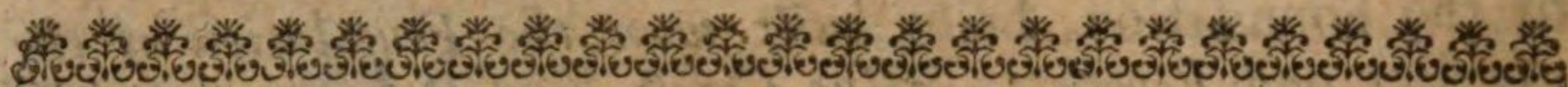
Thus we see the Sense of the Epistle for this Day : from whence we may learn,

1. To bless and praise God for the enlarging his Church, by the Accession and Admission of the Gentiles, whereby they, who before sat in Darkness, and the Regions of the shadow of Death, have a marvellous Light shining to them ; and we who spring from that Stock, are no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and Heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven : which is a Matter worthy of our greatest Praises and Thanksgivings,

2. From the Stability of the Church, and Christ's Promise to preserve it, let us learn to keep close and steddy to it, by a firm adhering to its Faith, frequenting its Worship, and continuing steadfast in its Communion. And be-

cause out of the Church there is ordinarily no Salvation; let us not desert it by Apostacy, or depart from it by Infidelity; but let us by the Example of *St. Thomas*, the Saint of this Day, hold fast to it, and persevere in it to the end.

Lastly, From the Unity of the Church, let us learn to unite in its Worship and Service, and with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God in it together. Christ having given us first *Apostles*, then *Prophets*, then *Pastors and Teachers*, for the edifying of his Church in Love, and building of us up in our most holy Faith; let us all join and build upon that Foundation, still keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledg of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, and the measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ; which God grant, for the Merits of his Son, &c.



DISCOURSE IV.

The GOSPEL for *St. Thomas's Day*.

St. John xx. 24, to the end.

Thomas, one of the twelve, call'd Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came; the other Disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and thrust my Hand into his Side, I will not believe, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day gives us some farther Account of *St. Thomas*, here call'd *Didymus*; it being usual in those days for those that travel'd into several Countries, to take two Names of the same Import in different Languages, the better to converse with the different People where they came: So *St. Peter* had to that name added that of *Cephas*, both which signify a Stone. And

And thus *St. Thomas* was likewise firnam'd *Didymus*, both which signify a Twin.

From the Name pass we to some more material things relating to this Apostle. And here to pass by the Slowness of his Understanding, intimated in that Passage, *John* 14. 4, 5. where our Saviour speaking to his Disciples of his departing from them, and going to his Father, tells them, that they knew both the Place and the Way whither he was going; to which *Thomas* reply'd, that *he knew not whither he was going*, and much less *the Way that led to it*, tho Christ had just before told him: Our Saviour, to comply with the Weakness of his Apprehension, told him again, that he was returning to Heaven from whence he came, and that he himself was the Way thither, where all that believe in him shall surely follow.

But the principal thing related in this Gospel, is *St. Thomas's* Behaviour and Discourse touching our Saviour's Resurrection. In which we have an account,

First, Of the Backwardness of his Faith in that great Point, and the palpable Evidence he requir'd therein for his Satisfaction.

Secondly, Of the full Conviction and Assurance of his Faith in it afterwards, together with the Ground and Reason of both. For the

First, The Backwardness of *St. Thomas's* Faith in this great Article of Christ's Resurrection, that may be easily gather'd from the many Circumstances that attended this great Action. In the Evening of that very Day whereon he rose, which was the first Day of the Week, *St. John* tells us, in this Chapter, that the Disciples were assembled together in a private House, and shut the Doors for fear of the *Jews*, to avoid the Dangers they might meet with from those that oppos'd and sought to hinder his Resurrection; but in this Privacy, Christ, by an Act of his Divine Power, open'd the Doors, and came in among them, saluting them in that common Form of Salutation, *Peace be unto you*, ver. 19. At whose Approach, *St. Luke* tells us, that they were *terrify'd and affrighted as if they had seen a Spirit*, taking him at first for a Spectre or Apparition: to remove which Fear, Christ shew'd them his Hands and his Side, bidding them to *handle and see him, for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have*; withal, calling for
Meat,

Meat, and eating before them, by which they were deliver'd from the Surprize, and *were glad when they saw the Lord.*

At this Meeting *St. Thomas was not with them, when Jesus came*, the Disciples not being then come together after their Dispersion upon our Saviour's Suffering: however, *the other Disciples said unto him, we have seen the Lord*; letting him know how he came in among them, and gave them plain Proof of his being alive again.

But *Thomas* obstinately refus'd to give any Credit to them, saying, *That except he saw in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and thrust his Hand into his Side, he would not believe.* A strange Piece of Incredulity in *Thomas*! who beside the Report of the Apostles, knew that the Prophets had plainly foretold his Resurrection, and that Christ had often told him, that *he must rise again from the Dead.* He could not but know his Power of doing it, from what he had seen of raising *Lazarus* and others from the Grave; and yet after all this, and many other Miracles which his own Eyes had seen, to doubt of a Truth so clearly reveal'd, and so well attested, could not but seem very strange and unaccountable.

But our Church, in the Collect for this Day, hath given us some account of this Matter, to wit, that *God Almighty suffer'd his Holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful of his Son's Resurrection, for the more or better Confirmation of our Faith in that great Article*: for had all the Apostles presently believ'd the first Report of it, they might have been thought a Company of easy credulous Persons, that could believe any thing as they would have it, and that they had a mind to impose upon the World by a cunningly devis'd Fable of their own inventing or spreading; which must have prov'd a great Stumbling-block or Hindrance to the Faith of future Ages. Now,

To prevent this dangerous Prejudice, God was pleas'd to permit some of them to fall into very great Doubts about it; and to require the utmost Satisfaction that Distrust and Infidelity it self could desire. When those pious Women, who were first at the Sepulchre, and found not the Body of Christ, came and told the Apostles, that he was indeed risen, and that they had seen a Vision of Angels, who declar'd him to be alive; 'tis said, *Their Words seem'd unto them as an idle Tale, and they believ'd them not*; Luke 24. 11. They took it for a Story begot-

ten only by the Strength of Fancy and Desire, in them that easily believ'd what they earnestly desir'd: yea, we find here, that when our Saviour came into the Room where they were with the Doors shut, they took him at first for a mere Phantom or Apparition, and would not presently believe it was he. And when they after told *Thomas* of it, who was then absent, he utterly rejected their News, and refus'd to give any manner of credit to it without better Evidence; which things were permitted by God, to encrease the Evidence, and to give the strongest Confirmation to this Truth, that it was capable of, for the Benefit of Posterity.

But how was *St. Thomas* cur'd of this obstinate Infidelity? Why, *In eight days after*, which was the next Lord's-day, our Saviour made another Appearance to his Disciples, when *Thomas* was present; for *being within, and Thomas with them, Jesus came, the Doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said again, Peace be unto you.* Where looking upon *Thomas*, he call'd to him, saying, *Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side; and be not faithless but believing.* By which he condescended to give him all the Satisfaction he desir'd, letting him see and feel the Wounds made in his Hands by the Nails, and thrusting his Hand into the Hole made in his Side by the Soldier's Spear; who being convinc'd by such plain and palpable Proofs that it was indeed he, and in the same Body that he suffer'd in, his Faith reviv'd, and made him with Wonder and Joy to cry out, *My Lord, and my God.* His Doubts now all vanish'd on a sudden, and a clear convincing Light was let in upon his Soul, by which he chearfully receiv'd him for his Lord and Master; and having rescu'd himself from the Power of Death, he calls him his God, upon whom he may safely rely for Life and Salvation.

Thus we see both the Backwardness of *St. Thomas's* Faith at first in the great Point of Christ's Resurrection, and likewise the full Conviction and Satisfaction he after receiv'd about it. By both which God Almighty hath given his Church an Instance to confirm us in the Belief of this great Truth beyond all farther Doubt or Contradiction. And they must be Monsters of Infidelity and Ingratitude, who shall call in question the Truth of our
Lord's

Lord's Resurrection, after so full Evidence and Confirmation of it.

But what was our Saviour's Saying, or Carriage to St. *Thomas* upon this solemn Profession of his Faith in him? Why, our Saviour said unto him, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believ'd; Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believ'd.* Where he partly blames the Backwardness of his Faith, that he was so hardly brought to it; and partly commends him, that he believ'd at last upon what he had seen. And 'tis as if he had said, *Thomas, thou dost well to believe thine own Eyes, and to be convinc'd by the Evidence of thy own Sight; but it had been much better if thou hadst believ'd sooner upon my Word, and the Report of the other Apostles.* So that from these Words of our Saviour, we may gather these two things,

1st, That to believe upon the Testimony of our Senses, is sufficient to Salvation. And

2dly, That to believe upon the Testimony of God without it, is a more excellent and commendable Act of Faith, and will be attended with a greater Reward; for he more especially pronounces them *blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believ'd.*

1st, I say, That to believe upon the Testimony of Sense, is sufficient to Salvation; for our Saviour accepted and approv'd of St. *Thomas's* Faith, which was grounded upon the sight and feeling of the Wounds of his Body. And upon this was the Faith of the Apostles and others in a great measure founded: for when they doubted the Reality of his Resurrection, and took him for a Ghost or Spectre, he shew'd them his Hands and his Feet, bidding them to handle him and see him; *For a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have:* where he appeals to the Judgment of their Senses about the Truth of his Body; that it was he himself, and that he was risen in the same Body in which he suffer'd, according to the Predictions of the Prophets, and as he himself had told them. And Christ was well pleas'd with the Faith and Conviction that proceeded from that sensible Demonstration; for God hath given us Senses, not barely for the Uses of this Life, but for the Services of the next, to be Instruments of Righteousness unto Holiness, to administer to God's Glory, and to promote the Piety and Devotion of the Soul. Seeing we say is believing, and Faith comes

comes by hearing; and what we have seen with our Eyes (saith St. John) and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you. And when we use our Senses to these Purposes, we exalt and sanctify them; Because thou hast seen, thou hast believ'd.

But our Saviour pronounces a greater *Blessedness on those that have not seen, and yet have believ'd*: To signify to us, that to believe upon the Testimony of God's Word, is a more noble and commendable Act of Faith, than to believe upon the Testimony of our Senses. For if we believe the Witness of Men (saith the Apostle) the Witness of God is greater, and carries better Evidence and Conviction.

And this is the Faith of all that have or shall live since our Lord's Ascension into Heaven; for we cannot now behold him with our bodily Eyes, as they did who liv'd in the days of his Flesh; and so we cannot have that sensible Evidence by seeing and handling of him, as they had. But yet we have that which is much better: for beside the Testimony we have from their Senses and Infidelity, we have the Testimony of God's Word, which St. Peter styles a more sure Word of Prophecy, upon which we may more safely rely; together with that rational Evidence and Assurances of the Truth of things, that is abundantly enough to satisfy any wise or sober Man, though he did not see the things done before his own eyes.

And this is a more acceptable and rewardable sort of Faith, than that which is in a manner forc'd upon us by the Impressions of our Senses, as being receiv'd upon the better Foundation of divine Revelation: In the former, the Senses may put in for some share of the Honour, being the main Motive of believing; whereas the latter depends entirely on God's Word, and gives him all the Glory. Beside,

The Testimony of our Senses is not half so sure and certain, as that of divine Revelation; for our Senses are fallible, and may, and do often deceive us: sometimes the Organs may be indispos'd, and so receive things amiss; sometimes the Object may be too remote, and so not discern it aright; sometimes again, the Object may be too splendid and glorious, and so dazle and confound the Sight: In all which, and in many other Cases we may not safely rely upon the Evidence of Sense.

But

But the Word of God is certain and infallible, that is an unerring Guide that cannot fail, or lead us amiss ; and so we may firmly rest and rely upon the Testimony thereof. For which reason *St. Paul* declares, that we Christians *live by Faith, and not by Sight* ; 2 Cor. 5. 7. meaning, that we depend more upon Revelation than Sense. And elsewhere, *We look not to the things that are seen, for they are temporal and uncertain ; but we look to the things that are not seen, for they are eternal and abide for ever.* 2 Cor. 4. 18.

But how must our Faith be qualify'd to attain this Blessedness ? Why,

(1.) It must be sincere and unfeigned. *St. Thomas's* Faith, tho' slow, was yet sure and sincere ; and so must ours be, not resting in an outward Profession, but real, working by Love, and appearing in the Fruits of Righteousness.

(2.) It must be hearty and affectionate, as his was ; moving all the Powers and Passions of the Soul, and making us to cry out with him, *My Lord, and my God* : putting our whole Trust and Affiance in him.

(3.) Our Faith must be well-assur'd, and confident ; not fluctuating in Uncertainties : for a wavering Faith will soon fail, and be shaken with every Appearance of Difficulty.

(4.) It must be honest, and accompanied with Integrity and a good Conscience, in discharging all the Duties that belong to the Place or Station wherein God hath set us. And,

Lastly, It must be constant and resolv'd, not sinking into Despondency, or staggering through Unbelief, but weathering all the Storms of Persecution with a fixt and resolute Mind, and holding out stedfastly unto the end. So did *St. Thomas* the Saint of this Day, who firmly adher'd to his Saviour, preaching his Resurrection, and propagating his Religion with great Success among the *Indians*, till the *Brachmans* fearing the Downfal of their Idolatries, privately ran him through with a Lance, and thereby brought him to the Crown of Martyrdom : Whose Constancy and Faith we are exhorted to imitate and follow.

These and many other Signs did Jesus (saith St. John) in the Presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book. But these are written, that ye might believe, that Jesus

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have Life through his Name : Which is the great End and Design of this Day's Gospel.

Upon the whole then, let us learn from hence to have a firm and unshaken Faith in Christ's Resurrection ; of which though God permitted *Thomas* to entertain many and great Doubts, yet was it chiefly, that by his Satisfaction we might the more perfectly believe it without any farther Doubt or Scruple : and though we cannot now see and feel his Wounds, as *Thomas* did, yet we ought upon the Foundation of his Incredulity and Conviction to build our Faith the more strongly in it. And if we truly believe it upon the Credit of Divine Revelation, as it stands confirm'd by the Doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles, our Faith will be more honourable, and receive a greater Reward, than if we saw it with our own Eyes. And this we should the rather do, because some Scepticks and Libertines in our Days are fallen into a Disbelief and Denial of this great Article, upon which the whole Fabrick of the Christian Religion stands, and by that means are led into Atheism and an utter Forgetfulness of God. Wherefore let us be no longer faithless, but believing, in this great Point of Christ's Resurrection ; so shall we e'er long partake of the Merits of his Death, and the Glories of his Resurrection : Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE V.

The EPISTLE for the Conversion of St. Paul.

ACTS ix. 1—23.

And Saul yet breathing out Threatnings and Slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord, went unto the High-Priest, and desired of him Letters to Damascus to the Synagogues, that if he found any of this Way, whether they were Men or Women, he would bring them bound to Jerufalem, &c.

THE Epistle for this Day gives an Account of the Time, Manner, and other Circumstances of St. Paul's Conversion; shewing what he was before, and what he was after it.

Before his Conversion he went by the Name of *Saul*, and was a very grievous and bloody Persecutor; for he *breathed out Threatnings and Slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord, and desir'd a Commission from the High-Priest to bring all of this Way, whether Men or Women, bound to Jerufalem, to inflict Cruelties upon them.* But as he journey'd and came near to *Damascus*, there suddenly shin'd round about him a great Light from Heaven, which struck him with that great Terror, that he presently fell to the Earth, and heard a Voice saying unto him, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*

Christ interprets all the Injuries and Indignities done to his Members, as done to himself, and is sensibly touch'd with their Cries and Groans; and will, without Repentance and Amendment, deal with their Persecutors accordingly.

The Strangeness and Loudness of the Voice, breaking out like a Clap of Thunder upon him, made him think it to be the Voice of God, and drew that Question from him, saying, *Who art thou, Lord?* To which he receiv'd Answer,

Answer, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* Where he minds him again, that he feels the Wounds of his persecuted Servants, and all the Cruelties exercis'd on their Bodies light upon him; and inasmuch as ye have done these Hardships to one of these, ye did them unto me: withal telling him, that he were best forbear these fierce Proceedings against him, and not be refractory to his Commands, which would draw greater Evils upon him; for 'tis hard for thee to kick against the pricks: which is a proverbial Speech taken from resty Cattel, who are wont to fling and kick against the Goad, and to draw back the more they are prick'd forward; which brings more and harder Blows upon them, than otherwise they would have. The Expression signifies to be refractory to Government and Discipline, which does but involve them in greater Guilt and Punishment: And so the words were Advice to *Saul*, not to be refractory, but obedient to the Commands given him; for he could not withstand God's Motion and Calling, and therefore he were better yield quietly to it, than draw back, which would draw greater Plagues and Punishments upon him.

Saul, upon the hearing of these words, fell into a Fit of Trembling and Astonishment. God can strike the most bloody Persecutors with panick Fears, and make the sturdiest Sinners to quake and tremble. So he dealt with *Pharaoh* for persecuting the *Israelites*; and because he refus'd, upon God's Command, to release them from their hard Bondage, he was follow'd with so many Plagues and Judgments, as brought down his haughty Spirit, and forc'd him to beseech *Moses* to intercede for him, as we read in the Book of *Exodus*. The like was done to *Nebuchadnezzar*, who for exalting himself above God, was humbled beneath the Dignity of a Man, and turn'd a grazing among the Beasts of the Field. The like Fate befel *Herod*, who for accepting the vain Applause of the Multitude upon an Oration made to them, crying it up for the Voice of a God, and not of a Man, was degraded below his Species, and became a Prey for Worms. And *Saul* here, for persecuting the Disciples of the Lord, was seiz'd with extraordinary Fears and Tremblings, which made him stoop and say, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* So did *St. Peter's* Converts, who being prick'd at the heart for what they had done to Christ's Disciples, ask'd *Peter* and the other Apostles, *Men and Brethren, what must we do?* Acts 2. 37.

The same was said by the Jaylor, *Acts 16.* who having in an unusual way lost his Prisoners, and fearing what might be done to him, came trembling, and fell down before *Paul and Silas*, saying, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* ver. 29, 30. So did one of those very Apostles, who in a Fit of Trembling said, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* signifying his Readiness to obey his Commands, if he did but know his pleasure. Whereupon the Lord bid him *arise, and go into the City, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do.*

And we shall find afterward, that he was not disobedient to the Heavenly Vision. In the mean time, we are told what befel him and his Companions in the way; for the next words declare, that *the Men who journey'd with him stood speechless, hearing the Voice of the Thunder, but seeing no Man*, that spake out of it. And *Saul* too was struck with Blindness; for *when he arose from the Earth, and when his Eyes were open'd, he saw no man*. Whether his Eyes were dazled with the Splendor of the Lightning that shin'd round about him and confounded his Sight, or whether he was smitten by a Divine Hand from Heaven, is not here said. Indeed,

All Sinners, and especially Persecutors, are spiritually blind; for they see not the Heinousness of their Faults, nor discern the Evil and Error of their Ways, but walk on still in Darknes, having the Eyes of their Understanding so blinded, that the Light of the Gospel cannot shine unto them: And we may say of all Persecutors, as our Saviour said of his, *They know not what they do.*

But beside this, *Saul* was here struck with a corporal Blindness; for he could not see his way, but was *led by the hand, and brought to Damascus*, where he continu'd *three days without Sight, and did neither eat nor drink*; being as it were in a Trance, that depriv'd him both of his Sight and Appetite. However,

The Lord having bid him go into the City of *Damascus*, where it should be told him what he must do, God had there provided one *Ananias*, a religious and devout Man, suppos'd to be one of the seventy Disciples: him the Lord order'd in a Vision to *arise and go into the Street call'd Strait, and to inquire in the House of Judas for one call'd Saul of Tarsus, for behold he prayeth.*

Here began *Saul's* Conversion, Prayer being the first Act of turning from Sin unto God, and is sometimes made to
 signify

signify the whole of Conversion. By this he who before persecuted all that call'd upon the Name of Jesus, now prays himself, calling upon the same Name. In this Prayer he is said to be in an Extasy; and then (as 'tis suppos'd) it was, that he was caught up into the third Herven, where he saw and heard things that were unutterable; being at the same time fully instructed in the Mysteries of the Gospel: which made him say afterward, that he receiv'd the Gospel not from Man, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Gal. i. 12. In this Vision also it was, that he saw one named Ananias coming to him, and laying his hands upon him, that he might receive his Sight.

Ananias hearing the Name of Saul mention'd in the Vision, excepted against the Man, saying, Lord I have heard by many, how much Evil he hath done to the Saints at Jerusalem, and that he had then Authority from the High-Priest to bind all that call'd upon his Name. To whom the Lord reply'd, Go thy way, the Man is chang'd, and become another Man than he was; He is now a chosen Vessel to me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the Children of Israel. From a Persecutor, he is to be a Publisher of me to the World; which he shall freely do, notwithstanding all the Troubles and Persecutions he may meet with for my sake: for I will arm him against them, by shewing him what great things he must suffer for my Name's sake, and frame him to an invincible Courage and Patience in bearing them; so that how fierce soever he hath been against me, he shall henceforth be a Champion to defend my Cause, and shall decline no kind of Dangers or Deaths to promote and propagate it.

Hereupon Ananias, instructed by the Vision, went his way, and enter'd the House where Saul was; who was likewise prepar'd by the Vision to receive him. Being come, he put his hands upon him, and said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appear'd unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy Sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, to be fitted for the Service of Christ's Church, to which thou art design'd. Upon which words, there immediately fell from his Eyes as it had been Scales, and he receiv'd his Sight forthwith, and arose and was baptiz'd: at which time his Name was chang'd from Saul to Paul. And having receiv'd Meat after his long fasting, he soon recover'd strength, and remain'd a while with the Disciples at Damascus.

Thus we see what went before his Conversion, together with the miraculous Manner and Circumstances that attended it.

Let us next see what follow'd after his Conversion : and here we are to consider his great Diligence and Zeal in preaching the Gospel ; the many Difficulties and Discouragements he met with in it ; and lastly, the Death he underwent for it : which take up the remaining part of the History of this great Apostle.

For the first : After his Conversion, 'tis said, *he straitway preached Christ in the Synagogues, that he is the Son of God.* He presently set about the Work to which he was call'd, and publickly preach'd in the Jewish Synagogues, that Christ was the promis'd Messias, and that eternal Son of God, that was to be the Saviour of Mankind.

At which all that heard it were amaz'd, that he who was lately so furious a Persecutor, should of a sudden become not only a Professor, but a Preacher of that Faith, which he sought so violently to root out ; saying within themselves, *Is not this he that destroy'd them which call'd on this Name in Jerusalem, and came hither to that intent, that he might bring them bound to the Chief Priests?* This startled them at first, to behold so great and sudden a Change in him, knowing what a hand he had in the stoning of Stephen, and what bloody Designs he had against the Christians in his coming to *Damascus.* But Saul increased the more in Strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the very Christ.

After which he withdrew into the Parts of *Achaia*, where he spent the First-fruits of his Ministry, preaching up and down for three Years, and planting Christianity among them. From whence he went to *Asia*, *Greece*, and round about to *Illyricum*, to *Rome*, and to the utmost Bounds of the Western World ; where, as *Eusebius* and others relate, he preach'd the Gospel in the *British* Islands.

After this, he remov'd to *Antioch*, where the Disciples, who were before call'd *Nazarens*, from Jesus of *Nazareth*, were first call'd Christians. From thence he departed to *Seleucia*, and so to *Cyprus*, where at *Salamis*, a great City in that Island, he preach'd the Gospel to the Jews, and converted many to the Christian Faith.

From that place he went to *Paphos*, where *Sergius Paulus* was Proconsul and Governour of the Island, a Man of great

great Wisdom and Prudence, whom he brought over to Christianity during his Residence there; and from him (as some think) he took the Name of *Paul*.

After that, he went to *Perga* in *Pamphylia*, and so to *Iconium* and *Lystra*; where he and *Barnabas* did a miraculous Cure upon a certain Cripple, that had been lame from his Mother's Womb, whom they by a word's speaking restor'd to his Feet, and made him walk about. Upon sight whereof, the People cry'd them up for Gods in the Likeness of Men, and would have done Sacrifice to them, had not the Apostles with great Care and Importunity prevented; which made them preach against Idolatry, to turn them from these Vanities to the living God.

But the Journeyings and Travels of this Apostle for the propagating the Faith of Christ, are so fully related in the Acts of his Apostles, and his Epistles to the several Churches, that I shall refer the Reader to them, and trace him no farther than *Jerusalem*, the Scene of his Sufferings, and from thence to *Rome*, the Place of his Execution and Martyrdom. In his Journey to *Jerusalem*, the People fearing what might befall him there, earnestly dissuaded him with Tears in their Eyes from going thither. To whom he stoutly reply'd, *What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus*; Acts 21. 13. At his coming there, he soon met with that Opposition both from the *Jews* and the *Romans*, that brought him into Bonds and Imprisonment. They charg'd him with Heresy, Blasphemy, Sedition, and turning the World upside down. The Answer whereunto brought him before Magistrates and Tribunals; where *Tertullus* and other glozing Orators aggravated his pretended Crimes, to instigate their Cruelties against him. Thus was he brought before *Felix* the Governour, before *Festus* and *Agrippa*, to answer the false Accusations laid in against him; which he did with that Magnanimity and Courage, with that Assurance and Force of Reasoning, that daunted his Adversaries, turn'd the Consciences of his Accusers upon themselves, and made his very Judges to tremble.

His Appeal to *Cesar* led him to *Rome*, where the Governours had resolv'd to send him. When he came there, which was in the Reign of *Nero*, he found no Favour, but many Frowns and Hardships from that cruel and bloody Emperor.

About that time, *Nero* had rais'd a general and bitter Persecution against the Christians, upon a pretence of their firing of the City; and finding *Paul* a Preacher and Ringleader among them, and having, as *St. Chrysostom* relates, converted one of his Concubines, who refus'd to yield to his impure Embraces, in a great Rage commanded him to be cast into Prison, and in a little time order'd his Execution; which, being a Freeman, was not by Crucifixion, but Beheading. The Place appointed for his Execution, was the *Aqua Salvia*, about three miles from *Rome*; where being led out, after some solemn Preparation, he cheerfully submitted his Neck to the fatal Stroke.

Thus died this great Apostle, who having fought the good Fight of Faith, and finish'd his Course with Patience, receiv'd first the Crown of Martyrdom, and after that a Crown of Glory. From whence we may learn two or three useful Lessons.

1. Not to despair of the Conversion or Amendment of the greatest Sinners; for we find here a persecuting *Saul* turn'd into a praying *Paul*, and one of the greatest of Sinners become one of the greatest of Saints. By whose Example we may encourage our selves with Hopes of Grace to repent, and of Mercy and Acceptance upon our Repentance, provided we bring our Wills and best Endeavours towards it.

2. Let us adore that miraculous Grace given to this Apostle for the benefit of the Christian Church, and bless God more particularly for the Advantages we have receiv'd from his great Travel and Pains. For Church-Historians tell us, that he was a great Instrument of planting the Gospel in these *British* Islands, whereby we Gentiles, who before sat in Darkness, have the Light of Divine Truths now shining out upon us; a Mercy for which we can never sufficiently praise God, nor honour the Memory of those Saints, by whom such great Favours are convey'd to us.

3. From *St. Paul's* indefatigable Pains and Industry in the Work whereunto God had call'd him, let us learn Diligence in the Calling and Station, wherein God hath plac'd us. And,

Lastly, From his Constancy and Perseverance in it to the last gasp, let us learn never to be weary of well-doing,

doing, but to hold out in it to the end: and then being with him faithful to the Death, we shall with him too shortly receive a Crown of Life; which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE VI.

The GOSPEL for St. Paul's Conversion.

St. Matthew xix. 27, to the end.

Peter answer'd and said unto Jesus, Behold! we have forsaken all and follow'd thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have follow'd me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in his Throne of Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands, for my Name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, &c.

THESE Words are selected for the Gospel on St. Paul's Day, because he was one of those that forsook all worldly Interest and Relations, to attend the Work and Business of his Saviour. And tho he was none of the twelve Apostles, yet had he the honour of being an Apostle in extraordinary, and to be immediately call'd in a way peculiar to himself, as hath been shew'd in the Epistle for the Day.

This Gospel for the Day brings in St. Peter asking in the name of the rest, what Reward they were like to have for this their Self-denial? Peter answer'd and said unto Jesus: Which words being an Answer to some foregoing Discourse of our Saviour's, will lead us back to the sixteenth Verse of this Chapter; where we read of a certain young Man coming to Christ, and asking, what he should do to inherit eternal Life? Christ answer'd him, If

thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments; particularly mentioning those against Murder, Adultery, Theft, and bearing false Witness; as also that of honouring Father and Mother, and loving our Neighbour as our selves. To which he confidently reply'd, that he had observ'd all these things from his Youth; asking, what he lacked farther to compleat his Felicity? Our Saviour told him, that if he would be perfect, and attain to what he desir'd, he must go and sell what he had, and give to the Poor, and come and follow him. At which the young Man drew back, and went away sorrowful, for he had great Possessions, which he was not willing to part with upon such easy Terms. Whereupon our Saviour discours'd to his Disciples, how hard a matter it was for a rich Man that trusted in his Riches to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

St. Peter, upon the hearing of this Discourse, answer'd and said unto Jesus, Behold! we have forsaken all and follow'd thee: we have done what this young Man refus'd to do, what shall we have therefore? meaning, what Benefit or Advantage shall we receive for so doing? for none are willing to leave all for nothing, or to follow a Master that pays no Wages. Gain is the Spur to Industry, and 'tis the Hopes of Profit that excites and encourages Endeavour; no man is pleas'd with Labour in vain, or to attend a bootless and unprofitable Service. 'Tis natural and reasonable to enquire, Cui bono? what shall we get by following a new Master, and altering the former Course of our Life? This is the Sense and Reason of St. Peter's Question here, What shall we have therefore? Which is as if he had said, "We have stript our selves of all for thy sake, "and left our selves nothing to follow thee; we have "ventur'd hard in forsaking all that we had, what Reward may we expect for running so great a risque?"

Some think that St. Peter herein aim'd at some worldly Greatness and Preferment, that he expected by following of Christ: like the Jews, who look'd for a glorious and pompous Messias to advance them in the World, to free them from the Roman Yoke, and restore them to their antient Liberty and Glory; and so would not close with our Saviour, who came in that Meanness and Poverty, from which they could promise themselves nothing.

And we find some of the Disciples tainted with the same Disease, being in the beginning mov'd on by a like Itch of Ambition and Respect to earthly Rewards. For we find

find them often asking our Saviour, *Wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?* and reinstate that ancient Polity in its former Strength and Splendor? And the Apostles were frequently moving for some worldly Profit and Advancement; asking for themselves what *Zebedee's Wife* did for her Children, *that one might sit at his Right Hand, and another at his Left in his Kingdom.* But our Saviour told her, *she knew not what she ask'd; for his Kingdom was not of this World.* He meddled not with earthly Crowns and Kingdoms, nor did he dispose of any worldly Honours or Dignities; all the Advancement he design'd for them, was to a Kingdom in Heaven, not to any earthly Crown or Dignity. And tho the Princes of the Gentiles exercis'd Dominion and Authority over others; yet it should not be so among them, they were to be so far from affecting Greatness and Preheminence, that *if any will be great among you, let him be your Minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant:* Mat. 20.

Yea, our Saviour was so far from flattering his Disciples with any hopes of worldly Wealth and Greatness, that he told them of nothing but Troubles and Afflictions that would attend them in his Service: *In the World, saith he, ye shall have Tribulation; but withal he bid them, not to fear, but to take Comfort, for he had overcome the World,* and it should do them no harm. *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus (saith the Apostle) shall suffer Persecution;* but to bear them up under it, our Saviour hath pronounc'd them *Blessed, that are persecuted for Righteousness-sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven:* Mat. 5. 10. So that St. Peter's Question, *What shall we have therefore?* if it had an eye to any worldly Power or Preferment, was a great Mistake in him, and proceeded from an Ignorance of the nature of Christ's Kingdom, and the main Design of his Coming: as will farther appear, by considering,

2dly, Christ's Answer to him and the other Apostles, which is in the next words: *Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto you, that ye which have follow'd me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.* Where by following him in the Regeneration, is meant their becoming his Disciples, receiving his Faith, embracing his Doctrine, and their being born again by Baptism to a new State and Scene of things, which is call'd *the washing of Regeneration, and renewing*

renewing of the Holy Ghost. By the Son of Man's sitting on the Throne of his Glory, is meant his Return to his Kingdom in Heaven, from whence he came down to make and shew us our Way thither; and when he is seated on his heavenly Throne, he will shortly after seat his Followers on twelve Thrones, alluding to the twelve Apostles, who shall each of them have their Throne of Glory, in order to the judging of the twelve Tribes of Israel; each of them having their particular Tribe to judg and condemn their Infidelity in not believing in Christ, or at least to be Assessors and Approvers of the Sentence that shall then be pronounc'd against them.

In short then, the Sense of our Saviour's Answer is, that ye that have left all to follow me, shall be no Losers by the Bargain; but as soon as I come to my Kingdom, ye shall be highly honour'd and rewarded by me; and in the Life to come, when all things shall be made new, and settled in an everlasting State, ye shall be made Partakers of the Glory of my Kingdom, and rais'd to as high a degree of Happiness as your Natures are capable of receiving. By which Answer he sought to take them off from all Thoughts and Expectations of any worldly Greatness, his Intention being to advance them, not here, but hereafter.

But I find a Reverend and Learned Author referring these words of our Saviour, *When the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit on twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel*, to a State here in this Life, and before the next World, to wit, after Christ's Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven; when being advanc'd to God's right Hand, he was said to sit in the Throne of his Glory; and his Apostles sitting on twelve Thrones, to judg the twelve Tribes of Israel, was instating them in the same Power of teaching and governing his Church, which he exercis'd himself during his stay upon Earth, whereby they rul'd and instructed the several Parts of it, as the Rulers of the Jews did their several Tribes. So St. Luke seems to expound it, chap. 22. 28, 29, 30.

But however that be, the Power our Saviour gave them after his Departure, was wholly spiritual, and related only to the good Order and Discipline of the Church, and so gave them no Encouragement to expect any temporal Greatness.

But our Saviour, who best knew, hath given us his own Sense in this Matter in the following words; *And every one that*

that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands, for my Name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting Life, &c. Where we have,

1. The Duty of Christ's Followers; and that is, to forsake Lands, and Houses, Relations, and all earthly Advantages *for his sake*; that is, for his Cause, and at his Call.

2. The Reward promis'd to so doing; *He shall receive a hundred fold* in this World, and in the World to come *Life everlasting*.

3. The Encouragement to come, tho never so late, to follow him; *for many that came first shall be last, and the last shall be first.* Of each of which briefly. And,

1. Of the Duty of Christ's Followers, which is, to forsake Houses and Lands, Father and Mother, Wife and Children, Brethren and Sisters, and all the nearest and dearest Relations *for Christ's sake*: that is, not absolutely, or upon any worldly or trivial account, for these things are the Necessaries and Comforts of human Life, and so not to be too easily parted with; but only for Christ's sake, for his Cause, and at his Command, when they stand in competition with, or in opposition to his Will, then are they to be renounc'd and forsaken by us. When we must either leave Christ or them, and cannot stick to both; when the loving of the one is the hating of the other, and the holding to one is the despising of the other, then we must not be at a loss what to do, or which to chuse, but must readily and chearfully leave all for Christ: for he himself hath said, *He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth Son or Daughter more than me, is not worthy of me*: yea, he that is not willing to take up his Cross and to suffer Death, rather than leave me, is not qualify'd to be my Disciple. St. Luke expresses it, by *hating Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, Brethren and Sisters*; yea, and his own Life too, if occasion require: which things, tho they are to be lov'd above all earthly Concerns, are yet to be hated and abandon'd, when they come in competition with our Saviour. And he that prefers any thing before or above him, or is unwilling to part with it for his sake, is not fitted for his Service, or to be a Follower of him; especially considering, that he never calls for it but for very good Reason, and for their own Advantage: *for he that findeth his Life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his Life for Christ's sake, shall find it*: for which see

Mat.

Mat. 10. 37, &c. Luke 14. 26, 27. This then is plainly the Duty and Interest of a true Disciple and Follower of Christ. From whence I proceed to consider,

2. The Reward that attends the so doing, which is partly in this Life, but chiefly in the next. And to the Question, *What shall we have therefore?* 'tis here answer'd, *Ye shall receive an hundred-fold in this World, and in the World to come Life everlasting.*

The Phrase of *receiving an hundred fold*, is taken from the Husbandman, whose Labour in sowing is recompens'd with a manifold Increase. Some have been so nice as to observe, that a Grain of Corn sown shoots out at least into seven Stalks or Ears; and supposing each Stalk or Ear to have but ten Corns in it, the Increase of that will amount to seventy fold, the Proportion mention'd elsewhere: but supposing fourteen or fifteen in each, as in many fruitful Places and Years it often happens, the Increase will amount to an hundred fold or more; which being the Proportion of the most fruitful Countries, is here set down for the Harvest of Christians, who have left all for Christ, even this Life. The Psalmist tells us, that in the very *keeping of God's Commandments, there is great Reward*, in the Peace of Conscience, the Health of the Body, and the Increase of Substance and a good Name; so that a vertuous Life hath even in this World, if there were no other, much the Advantage of a loose and dissolute Conversation.

But in the World to come their Reward will be infinitely greater, for there they *shall inherit everlasting Life*; where they shall sit down with *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* in the Kingdom of Heaven, which they shall enjoy not for a Term of Time or Years, which will soon expire, but by a Tenure of Inheritance, which will last for ever.

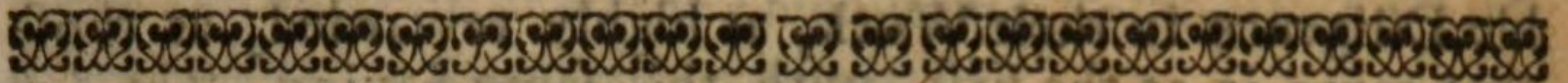
And lest any should be discourag'd from coming to Christ, by thinking it too late to follow him; 'tis added in the close, that *many that be first shall be last, and the last shall be first*: meaning, that many that came early to our Saviour, and were first in the Discipleship, if they hold not on, shall be postpon'd, and be the last and least too in the Reward: And that others that came not so soon, and were the last in the number of his Followers, may possibly outgo the former, and be advanc'd before and above them, and so become the first that will be rewarded by him. This is exemplify'd in the Parable of the Labourers in God's Vineyard, mention'd in the next Chapter, where they that

came

came in at the last Hour of the Day, were, by their double Diligence in their Work, as highly rewarded, as those that came in at the first, with this same Saying, *The last shall be first, and the first shall be last*; Chap. 20. 16.

An Instance whereof we have in *St. Paul*, the Saint of this Day, who tho last call'd, and therefore stil'd the least of the Apostles, and one born out of due time, being call'd after our Lord's Ascension into Heaven, yet for coming behind none of the Apostles, but labouring more abundantly than they all, he was highly rewarded with a *Crown of Righteousness*, which God the righteous Judg had laid up for him; and not for him only, but for all that love and long for his Appearance. Another and greater Instance hereof is that of the Gentiles, who tho call'd long after the Jews, and receiving the Gospel upon their Refusal of it, were receiv'd into greater Favour, and bless'd with clearer Revelations of God's Will than they; and so the *first became last, and the last first*.

Thus we see the Sense of this Day's Gospel; from whence we may learn the great Lesson of Self-denial, to take up the Cross, and follow our Saviour. Let us renounce the Pomps and Vanities of this sinful World, that we may be content to leave all and follow him; and with the many Worthies that are gone before us, learn to adhere to him in times of greatest Danger and Difficulty. We see the Reward we shall have therefore is great in this World, and will be much greater in the next. Wherefore let us imitate the Diligence and Fidelity of this great Apostle *St. Paul*, by whose painful Preaching the Light of the Gospel now shines throughout the World; and let us pray, as the Church directs us this Day, that we having his wonderful Conversion in remembrance, may shew forth our Thankfulness unto God for the same, by following the holy Doctrine which he taught, thro Jesus Christ our Lord: To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Glory, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, both now and for evermore, *Amen*.



DISCOURSE VI.

The EPISTLE for the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, commonly call'd, *The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

Mal. iii. 1 — 6.

Behold, I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the Way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts, &c.

THE Collect for this Day puts us in mind of the only-begotten Son of God's being presented in the Temple in the Substance of our Flesh; and thence teaches us to pray, that we may be presented unto God with pure and clean Hearts, by the same Jesus Christ our Lord: which Presentation of the Son being accompany'd with the Purification of the Mother, and both for our sake, have been thought fit to be kept in remembrance, and to that end to be yearly commemorated in the publick Devotions of the Church.

Accordingly the Epistle for this Day speaks of it in the Prophecy, and the Gospel in the Event or Accomplishment of it: both which are to be the Subject of our Meditation at this time. And,

I begin, as the Epistle directs, with the Prediction of it by the Prophet *Malachi*, in these words: *Behold, I will send my Messenger to prepare the Way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple.* Now this Messenger was *John the Baptist*, who was sent as a Harbinger before to prepare his Way, by preaching of Repentance, saying, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; for this is he that was spoken of by the Prophet Isaias, saying, The Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make his Paths strait: Mat. 3.3.*

After

After this the Son of God, the Desire of all Nations, and the promis'd Messiah, suddenly came to his Temple, being duly presented there according to the Custom of the Law, who likewise presented himself for the Redemption of Mankind.

There was a Law from the beginning (as appears by *Abel's* offering the Firstlings of his Flock, *Gen. 4. 4.*) for offering unto God, as the Creator and Proprietor of all things, the First-born of every Creature, both of Man and Beast, to be consecrated to him as his; as we read, *Exod. 13. 2.* *And 'tis written in the Law, that every Male that openeth the Womb, shall be call'd holy unto the Lord;* *Luke 2. 23.* To which God, by delivering the First-born of the *Israelites*, when he destroy'd those of the *Egyptians*, laid a farther Claim. After which the First-born of Man, being a Male, when he was a Month old, was to be brought to the Sanctuary or Temple, and there presented and offer'd by the Priest unto the Lord.

Accordingly the Blessed Virgin, when her First-born was a Month old, went up to *Jerusalem* to present him in the Temple; where being come, and admitted into the inner Court of the Congregation, she deliver'd the Holy Child to the Priest; who receiving him at her Hands, most solemnly dedicated and presented him unto the Lord. By this Ceremony the Son of God took possession of his Father's House; and at this time were the Prophecies of *Haggai* and *Malachi* fulfill'd, when he who was so long desir'd and sought for came to his Temple, and was solemnly presented to God in it. By which Dedication, the Glory of this latter House became, according to the Prophecy, far greater than the former: And tho *Herod* rebuilt this Temple for his own Honour, yet God Almighty turn'd that to the Glory of his Son, which he vainly intended for his own.

This is what God, by the Prophet here, plainly foretold, and assur'd the World of, saying, *Behold, the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in* (that is, Christ the Mediator and Founder of the New Covenant) *he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

But because the Ends and Effects of his Coming would be terrible to all impenitent Sinners, the Prophet asks the Question, *Who may abide the Day of his Coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?* meaning, that his Presence and Preaching shall be accompany'd with a powerful Influence

fluence of a Divine Spirit, and with those severe Judgments that shall destroy all that withstand and rebel against him: *For he is like a Refiner's Fire, and like Fuller's Soap; and he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of Silver; and he shall purify the Sons of Levi, and purge them as Gold and Silver.* A Refiner, you know, works in the Fire, to purify Gold and Silver, and to separate them from the Dross that is mingled with them. And the comparing our Saviour to a Refiner, signifies the fiery Trial, that all Christians must undergo to try the Strength of their Faith, and to separate the Good from the Bad: *He shall come in flaming Fire (saith the Apostle) taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; 2 Theff. 1. 8.* *He shall purify the Sons of Levi, refining both Priests and People; who are stil'd, A chosen Generation, and Royal Priesthood, being both made Priests unto God, to offer unto him spiritual Sacrifices. Rev. 1. 6. & Rom. 12. 1.*

Again, He is liken'd here to *Fuller's Soap*, which Fullers generally use in washing and whitening their Wool, to represent unto us Christ's washing and cleansing his Church, that he may present it pure, without Spot or Wrinkle, or any such thing; *Eph. 5. 27.* And all this, *that they may offer unto the Lord an Offering in Righteousness*; which in this Prophecy is call'd *Mincha purum, a pure Offering*: *Mal. 1. 11.* *In every Place Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering; for my Name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Where by *Incense* the Antients understood Prayers and Thanksgivings; according to that of *David, My Prayer shall ascend up like Incense*: and by *Mincha purum, the pure Offering*, was meant the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; where the Body and Blood of Christ, offer'd for us upon the Cross, are visibly represented to us by the Symbols of Bread and Wine: by receiving of which we commemorate his Sufferings for the Remission of our Sins.

And this is here call'd *an Offering in Righteousness*, because 'tis our just and reasonable Service that tends to promote Holiness, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness. And 'tis call'd *a pure Offering*, because it is or should be purely and spiritually offer'd; and that, as some think, in opposition to the impure Sacrifices under the Law, where unclean Beasts were sometimes offer'd. But others more probably think it so stil'd, from the Purity of Conscience

and

and pure Affection, with which it is to be offer'd. *To the Pure* (saith the Apostle) *all things are pure, but to the Defiled and Unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their Mind and Conscience is defiled.* Tit. i. 15, 16.

The Jews Offerings were profane and polluted, because they proceeded not from a true Faith, or a Conscience thorowly purg'd from dead Works to serve the living God. But the Christian Sacrifice is a pure Offering, being not tainted with Hypocrisy, nor polluted thro Unbelief. Hence we are told, that Sacrifices do not sanctify a Man, but a pure Conscience in him that offers sanctifies the Sacrifice. And because the Church wills us to offer up our Prayers and Praises with Simplicity, and a Conscience purify'd from all Malice and Hypocrisy, the Oblation is accounted by God for a pure Sacrifice: And it behoves us to present our Maker with such Oblations, wherein we best express our Thankfulness to him, with pure Minds and Faith unfeign'd, with stedfast Hope and fervent Love offering unto him the First-Fruits of his Creatures.

This is that Offering in Righteousness, or pure Offering, which the Son of God, who was this Day presented in the Temple for our sakes, teaches us to make to our heavenly Father; to which therefore we are to take the more diligent heed.

Accordingly our Church directs us, after the receiving the Holy Sacrament, wherein Christ presents himself and the Merit of his Sufferings to us, to present our selves both Soul and Body unto him, as *a living, holy, and acceptable Sacrifice unto him*, which is but *our reasonable Service*: then will this pure Offering find a gracious Acceptance, and our Sacrifice come up with a sweet-smelling Savour. So the Prophet here tells us, *Then shall the Offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the Days of old, and as in former Years.* Otherwise, Incense will stink in his Nostrils, and the best Oblations prove an Abomination to him.

Moreover, the Prophet here foretels of this Son of God's coming again to his Temple, to convince the World of Sin, and to reprove all Profaneness; for he brings him in saying in the next words, *I will come near to you to Judgment, and I will be a swift Witness against all Unrighteousness*: Where he is represented both as a *Judg*, to condemn, and a *Witness*, to testify against several sorts of Sinners: As particularly,

Against the Sorcerers, who deal in Witchcraft and diabolical Enchantments. And

Against the Adulterers, who violate the Bonds of Wedlock, and defile themselves with strange Flesh. And

Against false Swearers, who prostitute and pollute the Name of God, and bring in his Testimony to confirm their Lyes and Impostures. And

Against those that oppress the Hireling in his Wages, that deprive the Labourer of his Hire, and make use of their Neighbour's Work without Wages. And

Against the Oppressor of the Widow and Fatherless, who are both left destitute of all Assistance; the one from a Husband, and the other from a Father, and so must necessarily be in a forlorn and helpless Condition: and to oppress them, is a piece of barbarous Impiety and Injustice. And lastly,

Against those that turn aside the Stranger from his Right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts; that is, such as, instead of receiving and entertaining Strangers, reject and injure them, shewing neither Fear of God, or Regard of Men: for whom God Almighty here gives his Word, that they shall not go unpunish'd.

Thus we see both the Manner and Ends of the Son of God's coming to his Temple, where he was solemnly presented to the Lord, according to the Custom of the Law, and the Predictions of the Prophets, together with the Design and Consequents of this Presentation; of which we have a brief Account in the Epistle for this Day. From whence we may learn the following useful Lessons.

1st, From Christ's coming to the Temple, to fulfil the Prophecies, let us come to it, to fulfil his Precepts: so the Psalmist resolv'd, *We will go into his Tabernacle, and worship towards his Holy Temple.* And elsewhere, *I was glad (saith he) when he said unto me, We will go into the House of the Lord; our Feet shall stand in thy Gates, O Jerusalem!* This we find was the Practice likewise of the Holy Apostles; who, as St. Luke tells us, *were daily in the Temple, blessing and praising God: Chap. 24. 53.* This God requires and expects from us, that we should meet together in his House to praise him, and then he hath promis'd to meet us there to bless us, and to make us joyful in his House of Prayer. Let us not then forsake the assembling our selves together in God's House, as the manner of some is; but let us exhort and call upon

upon one another daily to resort to it, and the rather, because the Day of Reckoning is approaching.

2dly, From Christ's being presented in the Temple, and thereby honouring it with his Presence, let us learn to honour and esteem it Holy, by keeping it from all Profanation: he having taken possession of his Father's House, and thereby dedicated and devoted it to his Service, we may not desecrate or pollute it, by putting it to any other common Uses. And therefore we read, that at our Saviour's Entrance into *Jerusalem*, he went into the Temple, where he had been formerly presented, and finding his Father's House made a Market, or Place of Merchandize, he was highly incens'd at the Profanation; insomuch that, as *St. John* tells us, he made a Scourge himself, and with great Indignation whip'd the Buyers and Sellers out of it, saying, *It is written, My Father's House shall be called a House of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves*: thereby fulfilling that Prophecy of him, *The Zeal of thy House hath even eaten me up*. 'Twas God Almighty's own Command, that we should hallow his Sabbath, and reverence his Sanctuary; *Lev. 19. 30.* And 'tis our Saviour's Precept, that we should keep it Holy, by setting it apart from vulgar Uses, and consecrating it to Divine Service: And therefore we should take care decently to repair and beautify the Temple, and after that diligently to repair and resort to it.

3dly, From Christ's coming, as a Refiner's Fire, to purify the Sons of *Levi*, and as Fuller's Soap to wash and cleanse his Church, we should learn all Purity both in Life and Doctrine. *Blessed are the pure in Heart* (saith our Saviour) *for they shall see God*; *Mat. 5.* And without Purity and Holiness no Man shall see the Lord; for *he that hath this Hope* (saith *St. John*) *must purify himself, even as he is pure*. In Heaven there is no Defilement enters, nor can any unclean thing inhabit those pure and undefil'd Regions. Our Saviour's Coming was to free us from the Pollution, as well as the Power of Sin, and thereby to fit and qualify us for the Beatifick Vision; for otherwise we are neither prepar'd for that, nor that for us. And therefore having these Promises, let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.

Lastly, From Christ's Coming to sit in Judgment, and be a swift Witness against several sorts of Sinners, let us learn to prepare for his Coming, and to prevent the Doom by true Repentance; turning from all Sin unto God, and

especially from those mention'd in the Epistle for this Day. As,

(1.) From all Sorcery and Witchcraft, either by practising any magical Arts, Spells or Charms, or by seeking to Witches or Wizards for telling of Fortunes, or finding of lost Goods: These are reckon'd among the Works of the Flesh and of the Devil; and to have recourse to them, is to seek more unto Satan than unto God.

(2.) From Adultery and Uncleanness; for *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judg*, and be a swift Witness against all that break the Covenant of Marriage, and defile their Neighbour's Wife.

(3.) From Perjury and false Swearing, whereby the Name of God is dishonour'd, Right is perverted, and great Wrong and Injury is committed.

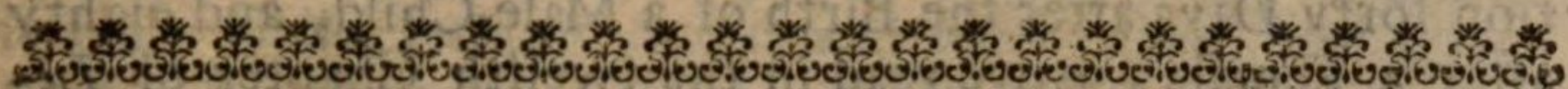
(4.) From all Sorts and Degrees of Oppression, particularly of the Hireling, by detaining the Wages of his Work, and withholding the Hire of the Labourer; and especially of the Widow and the Fatherless, of whom God hath undertaken to be the Patron and Defender, and will certainly be the Avenger of all that do them Wrong.

Lastly, Let us turn from all Oppression of Strangers, and injuring of such as do fly to us for Succour; for that will add Unmercifulness to Injustice, and will provoke God to punish us for both.

In a word, Let us turn from all Sin and Wickedness, and then God will turn in much Mercy towards us, and stand by us in the needful time of Trouble: Which God grant, &c.



D I S-



DISCOURSE VIII.

The GOSPEL for the Purification of the
Blessed Virgin Mary.

St. Luke ii. 22——40.

And when the Days of her Purification, according to the Law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; as it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every Male, that openeth the Womb, shall be called Holy unto the Lord; and to offer a Sacrifice, &c.

THE two memorable Things, we are to call to mind this Day, relating to our Saviour's Incarnation, are his Presentation in the Temple, and the Purification of his Virgin Mother. Of the first, I treated the last time in the Epistle for the Day, which contains the Prophecy of it: Of the last, I am now to speak from the Gospel for the Day, which contains the Accomplishment of that, and the Purification of the Mother; and begins in these words:

When the Days of her Purification, according to the Law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; where he was solemnly presented and dedicated unto the Lord, according to that Law of his, that required every Male, that openeth the Womb, to be called Holy unto him. Exod. 13. 2.

This being accompany'd with the Purification of the Mother, are both remember'd by the Church at this time.

When the Days of her Purification, according to the Law, were accomplish'd, she went into the Temple, not only to present her Son, but to offer a Sacrifice for her own Cleansing; for all Women, after Child-bearing, were to be held
unclean,

unclean, and so were to be separate from the Congregation forty Days after the Birth of a Male-Child, and eighty after a Female; as we read in the twelfth Chapter of *Leviticus*. And when they were expir'd, at their coming into their Sanctuary, they were *to offer a Sacrifice according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord*: that is, if they were rich, they were to bring a Lamb of the first Year for a Burnt-Offering, and a young Pigeon, or Turtle-Dove, for a Sin-Offering; and if any, by reason of Poverty, could not go to the Expence of both, then two Turtle-Doves, or young Pigeons, were accepted for a sufficient Oblation: in compliance herewith, the Blessed Virgin, who being of a low and mean Condition, and so purify'd *in forma pauperis*, brought her two Turtle-Doves, the one as an Offering for her Cleansing, the other as an Holocaust of Adoration and Thanksgiving for her Delivery; by which she punctually observ'd the Law of Purification, tho the immaculate Conception and Birth of our Lord really needed no such Ceremony.

By this we are taught Obedience to all the lawful Injunctions of the Church and Country, whereof we are Members. Tho there was no Impurity in the Birth of our Saviour, and the Blessed Virgin contracted no Pollution by bringing him forth; yet, being *born under the Law*, they submitted to it, *to fulfil all Righteousness*; and so observ'd the Laws that were requir'd of others upon the like occasion. Obedience to Authority is a necessary Duty, even when the Rites it requires are no otherwise necessary, than merely by being injoin'd: so did the Son of God here, and so did his Blessed Mother; and so, by their Example, ought we to do likewise.

But whilst they were both in the Temple, offering and doing after the Custom of the Law, *Behold, there was a Man in Jerusalem, whose Name was Simeon, and the same Man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him*: meaning, that he was a Holy Religious Man, that earnestly look'd and long'd for the Coming of the Messiah; and being endu'd with the Spirit of Prophecy, it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see Death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ: that is, he should see the promis'd and long-expected Messiah before he died. Whereupon he was led by the same Spirit into the Temple, at that very time when the Parents of the Holy Child were performing the Rites requir'd

requir'd in the Law for him; which being done, he takes the Holy Child into his Arms, and blesses God, and then says his *Nunc dimittis*; *Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace, according to thy Word, for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation.* He only desir'd to live, to have a sight of his Saviour; and having obtain'd his Wish by this sight of him in the Temple, he was willing to leave this World, to be receiv'd into a better. He was dead to the World, as to all other things before, and desir'd to have his Life prolong'd no farther, than to have this much long'd and pray'd for Happiness of seeing the Messiah, and to behold the Author of Man's Redemption; and when that Desire was fulfil'd, he valu'd nothing more here, but begs leave to be gone: but yet he would not rashly throw away himself, or shorten his Days before the time; he would not leave the World without the Leave of him that plac'd him in it; he was willing to *depart*, but it was *in peace* with God and Man, that he might partake of that *Salvation, which the Son of God had prepared before the face of all People.* For this *Lamb of God*, that was to make an Atonement for the Sins of Mankind, is said to be *slain before the Foundation of the World*; that is, in God's Decree and Determination, it being agreed from all Eternity between the Father and the Son, what should be the Manner and Measure of his Sufferings, to render him an effectual and all-sufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of the World; and that not of a selected Company of the Jews only, but of the whole World of Gentiles also; for he was ordain'd *to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as *to be the Glory of his People Israel*: meaning, that he was to discover this Salvation by the Light of his Gospel to those that sat in Darkness, and the Shadow of Death, as well as to his own peculiar People, that sat under the Light of his Countenance.

But this Sacred Hymn being adopted into the Holy Offices of the Church, is more largely treated of in the Evening-Prayer after the second Lesson; to which therefore I shall refer the Reader.

After this we read, that *Joseph and the Mother marvelled at those things that were spoken of him*: for tho an Angel had reveal'd to them the miraculous Manner of his Birth, which they found punctually fulfil'd; yet they did not thorowly know or understand the great things that should be spoken of, and done by him: and therefore when they

saw and heard some of them, they could not but wonder, as well as rejoice at them.

And *Simeon*, when he had deliver'd the Holy Child back again to his Mother, and blessed God for giving him the happy Sight of him, blessed the Parents also, as Persons highly favour'd of God, for their near Relation to his Son; and after his giving the Ghostly Benediction to them, prophetically told the Mother, that *this Child was set for the Fall and Rising again of many in Israel, and for a Sign that should be spoken against*: signifying to her the Event of this great Birth, that it would be a means of bringing great Happiness to some, and an occasion of much Misery to others. They that will take him for their Saviour, by believing on him, and receiving his Doctrine, and accepting of the Terms of Salvation tender'd by him, shall reap unspeakable Benefit and Advantage from him, both in Grace here, and in Glory hereafter. He is set for the Rising and Advancement of all such as yield to his Scepter, and will be govern'd by him; for they shall receive Rest and Comfort to their Souls now, and after this Life endless Glory and Felicity.

But they that are obdurate and impenitent, that will not believe, obey, or trust in him, but withstand his Power and Kingdom; all such will bring unspeakable Misery and Punishment upon themselves; and instead of being redeem'd and sav'd by his Coming, it will but sink them the deeper in the Gulph of Perdition, and aggravate their Condemnation. He is set for the Fall and utter Ruin of such obstinate Unbelievers, for he will bruise them with his Rod of Iron, that will not submit to the Golden Scepter of his Kingdom. The Prophet *Isaiah* foretold, that *he should be a Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offence to the House of Israel; a Gin and a Snare to the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many should stumble and fall, and be broken in pieces*: Isa. 8. 14, 15. Which Prophecy is quoted and apply'd by *St. Peter*, 1 Epist. 2. 6, 7, 8. where we read, that *to them that believe he is a precious and living Stone, disallow'd indeed of Men, but chosen of God, and precious*: and we too as lively Stones are built up a spiritual House to him, who is the chief Corner-Stone, to bind and support the Building; and *he that believeth in him shall not be confounded*. But to the Disobedient and Unbelieving he is a Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offence, at which they stumble and fall to their utter Ruin, and by dashing against it are broken in pieces.

But

But this must be understood of the accidental Issue and Event, not the primary End and Design of his Coming; for this Stone was not laid in *Zion* merely as a Stumbling-Block to trip up the Heels of his Followers, but many would unhappily take occasion of falling by it to their own Destruction. Our Saviour was not born into the World only to be a Gin to catch, or a Snare to entrap Mankind; for if so, it had been better he had never been born, and the Angels publishing the glad Tidings of the Gospel, would prove rather a sad Message of Misery and Destruction to the World.

This then can only be an accidental Consequence or Event, proceeding from Mens Perverseness and Opposition, and occasion'd by their own Default, not the proper End and Effect of his Incarnation. If any be offended in Christ, and thereby hazard their own Salvation, the Offence is only taken, not given: and tho this Child is here said to be *set for the Fall as well as the Rising again of many in Israel*, and for a Sign that should be spoken against; yet that cannot be meant of any Divine Decree, that should order or necessitate it, for that would make God the Author both of their Sin, and their Destruction, which he frequently disclaims; but he therein only declares the unhappy Effect of some Mens Obstinacy and Unbelief, who would turn the most sovereign Medicine into Poison, and make that which was intended for the rising of all Men, become to some an occasion of falling. Nor did God *set up his Son for a Sign to be spoken against*, but as an Ensign to the People to come in and be saved by him; which nothing but their own Infidelity and Opposition can hinder.

These things good old *Simeon* here foretold concerning this Holy Child, namely, that he should be so far from being receiv'd or closed with by some, that he should be contradicted and spoken against by many, which happen'd to him during the whole Course of his Life; wherein not only his Doctrine was oppos'd, but his Person too revil'd as an Impostor, *as a Glutton, and a Wine-Bibber, and a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*: but more especially at his Death, when being lifted up on the Cross, he was mock'd, reproach'd and blasphem'd by the Multitude, and loaded with all manner of Calumnies and Contradiction of Sinners against himself; at which, *Mary* his Mother being present, the same Prophet foretold, that *a Sword should pierce thro her own Soul also*, that the Thoughts of many Hearts may be revealed:

reveal'd: meaning, that their sharp Calumnies and Reproaches would enter her Soul like a Sword, and pierce her thorow with many Sorrows, whereby the Wickedness of Mens Hearts would be discover'd.

Tho some understand these words as a Prophecy of the manner of her Death, that she should die and perish by the Sword, and her Glory be among the Martyrs; which *Epiphanius* and others take to be the fulfilling of this Scripture, *A Sword shall pass thro thine own Soul also.*

About the same time that good old *Simeon* came into the Temple to see the Messiah presented, and his Mother purify'd there, that our Faith in these great Points might be establish'd out of the Mouth of two Witnesses, and those of both Sexes; a Woman of great Age, viz. *Anna* a Prophetess, detain'd in this Life, as *Simeon* was, for the beholding of the Lord Christ, came in at the same time, and seconded *Simeon* in the like Relation concerning this Child's being the promis'd Messiah and Saviour of the World; in which the great Strictness and Severity of her Life, and her Sequestration of her self from common Converse, much like *John* the Baptist, added much to her Testimony. She is describ'd by the Evangelist here, to be the Daughter of Phanuel, of the Tribe of Aser, to be of a great Age, and had lived with an Husband seven Years from her Virginity, to be a Widow of fourscore and four Years; that she departed not from the Temple, but served God with Fasting and Prayers night and day. Not that she was never out of the Temple, but that she never forsook it, but kept close to it at all set Times of Prayer. This devout Widow and Prophetess came into the Temple at the same instant with *Simeon*, and was there equally transported with Joy at the happy Sight of this Heavenly Infant, blessing and praising God for the same; and after giving thanks unto the Lord, declar'd the same things of him with good old *Simeon*, that he was the long-expected Messiah, that brought Salvation to Jew and Gentile; speaking of him not to them only that were present, but to all that look'd for Redemption in Jerusalem. And when all these things were perform'd according to the Law, the Parents return'd with him into Galilee, to their own City Nazareth, where the Child grew in Stature, and waxed strong in Spirit, filled with Wisdom, and the Grace of God was upon him.

This is briefly the Mercy we call to remembrance this Day, which was antiently celebrated with solemn Processions, the Manner whereof was this: A great Multitude of People being gather'd together, they march'd through the Streets and Highways two by two, with Candles in their Hands, consecrated and blest by a Bishop; from which Usage, and the many Candles set up in the Church on this Day, it was call'd *Candelaria*, or *Candlemas*.

With these Lights they went on in their Processions, to signify, that *their Light should shine before Men*; Mat. 5. They that went out first, return'd last, to signify their Humility; *In Honour preferring one another*, Rom. 12. 10. They went on their Way singing, to signify that *God loveth a chearful Giver*; 2 Cor. 9. 7. And their Song was, *Great is the Glory of the Lord*, to signify their devout Praises and Thanksgivings to their Maker. And the Procession it self taught them, not to stand idle in the Way of Life, but to proceed forward in a Course of Virtue, and to be still going on to Perfection. This Account is given by St. Bernard of the Manner and Reasons of their Processions on this Day.

But what may we learn from this Days Festival? Why,

1. To bless God for the Confirmation of our Faith in the Holy Jesus, given us by these two Witnesses, who were blest with the Sight of him; as also for the Manifestation thereby made to us of the Consolation of *Israel*. For though we cannot now see our Saviour with our bodily Eyes, as they did; yet we may behold him with an Eye of Faith, as he is reveal'd to us in Holy Scripture, where our Saviour hath pronounc'd those *blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believ'd*.

2. From the Purification of the Virgin Mother, we may learn to purify our selves both in Body and Soul, and to practise that Holiness and Purity, together with that Obedience which our Saviour and the Blessed Virgin have taught us by their own Example, and from them learn to be meek and lowly in Heart.

Lastly, Let us learn from good old *Simeon*, never to think of dying in Peace, till we have embrac'd our Saviour with our Understandings and Affections, and heartily believe and practise what he hath reveal'd and taught us. Then will he shorrly embrace us in the Arms of his Mercy,

cy, and bring us to the blessed Vision of himself in the highest Heavens: Which God grant us for ever. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE IX.

The EPISTLE for St. *Matthias's* Day.

Acts i. 15, to the end.

In those days Peter stood up in the midst of the Disciples (the Number of the Names together, were about an hundred and twenty) and said, Men and Brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the Mouth of David spake concerning Judas, who was Guide to them that took Jesus, for he was numbred with us, &c.

THE Collect and Epistle for this Day, acquaint us with two things.

First, A Vacancy in the Apostolate, by the untimely Death of Judas, one of the twelve Apostles. And,

Secondly, The filling up that Vacancy, by the Election of St. Matthias, one of the seventy Disciples; together with the Manner and Circumstances, that attended both. For the

First, We read here, that St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles, stood up in an Assembly of the Disciples and others, to the number of about an hundred and twenty, and said unto them, Men and Brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfill'd, which the Holy Ghost spake by the Mouth of David, concerning Judas, who was a Guide to them that took Jesus. The Scripture here referr'd to, that was to be accomplish'd, is that of David, Psal. 41. 1. Yea, even mine own familiar Friend, whom I trusted, who did also eat of my Brerd, laid in great weight for me. This was punctually fulfill'd in Judas, whom our Saviour took into the Number

Number of the Apostles, and trusted him with the Power of the Keys equally with the rest; and yet of him the Holy Ghost foresaw and foretold, that he would betray Jesus, and be a Guide to others to take him; which he did by the Signal of a Kiss, and thereby deliver'd him up into the hands of his Enemies: as we read, *Mat. 26. 47, 48, &c.*

Having thus betray'd and sold his Master for thirty Pieces of Silver, his Conscience smote him for so vile and perfidious an Act; the Sting and Remorse whereof made him repent, and bring back the thirty Pieces of Silver, to the Chief Priests and Elders, casting them down in the Temple, saying, *I have sinned, in that I betray'd innocent Blood.* Which Mony they thought not fit to put into the Treasury, because it was the Price of Blood, and therefore took counsel, and bought with it the Potters Field to bury Strangers in; wherefore that Field was call'd the Field of Blood unto this day. *Mat. 27. 6, 7, 8.* After the Purchase of this Field with the Reward of Iniquity, paid indeed by the Chief Priests and Elders, but occasion'd by the Treachery of Judas; by which St. Matthew's Account may be reconcil'd with St. Luke's: after this, I say, St. Matthew saith, he went out and hang'd himself; St. Luke here, that falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and his Bowels gush'd out. The Word in the Original signifies to be suffocated, choak'd, or strangled, and that may be either by a Halter hanging himself, as St. Matthew relates, or by a suffocating Fit of Sadness and Melancholy, which might make him fall headlong, and by it to be so burst, as the Bowels might gush out, as St. Luke here relates it. However that be, 'tis certain he came to a desperate and miserable End, and a Place among the Apostles thereby became void; to which St. Luke here applies that of the Psalmist, *Let his Habitation be desolate, and his Bishoprick let another take;* *Psal. 69. 25. & Psal. 109. 8.* This was the Vacancy, together with the Occasion and Manner of it. From whence I proceed,

Secondly, From this Vacancy in the Number of the Apostles, to the filling it up by the Election of Matthias, one of the seventy Disciples: to which one of the Apostles, suppos'd to be St. Peter, prepar'd the Way, by saying in the next Words, *Wherefore of these Men, which have companied with us all the time that Jesus went in and out among us,*
beginning

beginning with the Baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordain'd to be a Witness with us of his Resurrection. The Sense of which words is, that *Judas* being fallen from his Office by his Treachery to his Master, 'tis necessary to chuse one in his place, to fill up the Number of the twelve Apostles; which Number, 'tis thought, our Saviour made choice of, in allusion to the twelve Patriarchs, or twelve Heads of the Tribes of *Israel*: and we are to supply his place by one that hath been with us ever since our Lord *Jesus* began to teach us, even from the time that *John* baptiz'd him till his Assumption up to Heaven, to be taken into the Apostleship, and to perform that which *Judas* should have done; namely, to preach the Gospel, confirm'd by Christ's Resurrection from the Dead, of which they were to be Witnesses in all places where they were sent.

Accordingly in this Election *two* Persons thus qualify'd were nominated and set up for this purpose; to wit, *Joseph call'd Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.*

The Manner of their Election was not by Suffrage, but by Lot; a way much used in antient times both by Jews and Gentiles, for the deciding of any doubtful and difficult matters, looking on it as a referring things to God Almighty, which could not otherwise be well determin'd: according to that of *Solomon*, *The Lot is cast into the Lap, but the whole disposing of it is from the Lord*; Prov. 16. 33. This was wont to put an end to much Strife, and many Controversies: so the same Wiseman tells us, Prov. 18. 18. *The Lot causeth Contentions to cease, and parteth between the Mighty.*

Now the Lots mention'd as used in Holy Scripture, were always about things of great weight and consequence, and never about slight and trivial Matters, that were not worthy of an Appeal to God Almighty: And the Cases therein mention'd, were,

1st, In the Election of Magistrates and Judges, wherein the Choice was by Lot refer'd to God, to direct to whom he pleas'd. So *Saul* was chosen by Lot to be King of *Israel*, which is therefore said to be from the Lord, 1 Sam. 10. Not from the Choice of the People, as some would have it, but by the Direction of God.

2^{dly}, Lots were used in the dividing of Lands and Inheritances. So we read that the Land of *Canaan* was divided

ded among the twelve Tribes of *Israel*, and their several Families by Lot, whereby God assign'd to every one their Part and Portion; *Numb.* 33. 54. From which Example, in the following times the Decision of doubtful Cases among Heirs was wont to be refer'd and ended by Lots.

3dly, Lots were used for the Discovery of some secret Wickedness, that was prejudicial to the Publick, and yet could not, for want of Witnesses or other Evidence, be otherwise found out. Thus *Achan's* Sacrilege, in purloining the accursed or devoted thing, was discover'd by Lot, and he brought to condign Punishment, *Josh.* 7. 16, &c. And thus *Jonas's* Disobedience to God's Command, which occasion'd such a rough and violent Storm, as endanger'd the Lives of all that were in the Ship, was found out by Lot, *Jonah* 1. 7. where we read, that the Mariners, after their calling each upon their God, said one to another, *Come let us cast Lots, that we may know for whose cause this Evil is upon us*; which was an usual Course among them in such cases: and they cast Lots, and the Lot fell upon *Jonas*.

These were the principal Cases, wherein Lots were antiently used; to which, as to a Sacred Thing, they apply'd themselves with great Devotion and Sanctity.

But in process of time, this Usage was abus'd to bad purposes by Spells, Charms, and other sorts of Sorcery and Enchantment; in which they had recourse not so much to God, as to the Devil. From hence proceeded the magical and diabolical Arts of Necromancy, Chiromancy, Judicial Astrology, and the like; some pretending to foretell future Events, to find out stolen Goods, to tell Fortunes, and the like: whereby they impose upon the Credulity of the Ignorant, using that *cunning Craftiness* mention'd by the Apostle, by which *they lie in wait to deceive*.

This hath occasion'd that Question, whether Lots may be lawfully used by Christians or no? In answer to which, we must distinguish of three sorts of Lots: As,

(1.) Of Lots of Consultation, wherein Inquiry is made of somewhat that must be done, as the Choice of Magistrates, or the Discovery of some doubtful matters, that cannot otherwise be decided.

(2.) Lots of Division, whereby some things are to be divided among more; as in Lands, Goods, or any other thing; what belongs to each, or falls to their share.

(3.) Lots

(3.) Lots of Divination, for the Knowledg of future Accidents, or telling of Fortunes, and the like.

Of the two former sorts of Lots there can be no doubt of the Lawfulness of them, being allow'd and justify'd by many Examples in Holy Scripture, wherein Elections have been made, Lands divided, and many doubtful Cases decided by casting Lots; some whereof were appointed, and others approv'd by God himself.

But for Lots of Divination, in telling of Fortunes or things to come, these have been ever condemn'd by the Laws of God and Man; being corrupted by Witchcraft, Conjuring, and Invocation of Devils. Such was the Folly and Superstition of the Heathens, who would tell future things, and determine the Fate of Persons, and the Issue of Actions, by the Entrails of Beasts, the flying of Birds, by Signs in the Air, Fire and Water, and many other ways of Sorcery and Enchantment; which being justly reckon'd among the Works of the Devil, which we renounce in our Baptism, are not to be allow'd or countenanc'd among Christians.

But here some have started a farther Question, about the Lottery of Cards and Dice, whether that be lawful, or may be safely used by Christians? In answer to which, I say, That in that, as in other indifferent things, if we separate the right Use from the Abuse of them, there can be no just doubt of their Lawfulness. Now the right Use of them consists in passing away some spare Hours in such innocent and inoffensive Diversions, in cherishing Friendship and Society among Neighbours, in relaxing and recreating the Mind sometimes from severer Employments, which else would sink under the burden of worldly Cares and Troubles; and if we use them moderately and seasonably to these ends, without neglecting greater and weightier matters, there can be no fault or offence found in them. The Abuse of them lies in spending too much of our Time and Substance in them, which may engender Strife, Swearing, and spilling of Blood; in making a trade of them, and thereby making a By-work to become our main Business, with the Neglect of the proper Work of our Vocation: which things are attended with the Loss of Time, the Decay of Substance, and impoverishing of our selves and Families; which put a Guilt and Unlawfulness into them, and turn harmless Recreations into heinous Provocations. In short, if we sever
the

the right Use from the Abuse of these things, we need not entertain any Scruples about them. However, the Apostle's Advice in these matters is, *Let every Man be fully persuaded in his own Mind, for whatsoever is not of Faith, or with the full Persuasion of Mind, is Sin; and he that doth any thing doubtingly, is damned, Rom. 14. To him that thinketh any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean: And to him that thinketh Cards and Dice to be evil, or cannot well govern his Temper and Passions in the use of them, to him they are evil; and he does wisely in abstaining from them: but to them that are better inform'd, and can more easily command themselves, to them they are innocent Diversions, and may be safely and lawfully used by them.*

I have insisted the longer upon this, to give some Light and Satisfaction to scrupulous Persons in these matters.

But to return to *Matthias*, the Saint of this Day: He was, upon the Fall of *Judas* from the Apostleship, put upon the Election with *Joseph* call'd *Barsabas*, to succeed in his place, and the Choice was to be determin'd by Lot: but before they enter'd upon it, they pray'd unto God to direct the Choice, saying, *Thou, O Lord, who knowest the Hearts of all Men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this Ministry and Apostleship, from which Judas by his Transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.* Where the Matter was refer'd to God Almighty's Decision, and great Reverence and Religiousness was shew'd in the Action; for they pour'd out their Prayers, before they gave forth their Lots, and then by God Almighty's Direction the Lot fell upon *Matthias*, and he was number'd with the eleven Apostles: and so succeeded in the room of *Judas*, who fell from the Apostleship, that he might go to his own place; which place is variously interpreted, some understanding it of *Judas*, that he went to his own place, that is, to Hell, the place of eternal Damnation, which for his Treachery to his Master he justly deserv'd. Others understand it of *Matthias*, that he went to his own place, that is, to the place from whence *Judas* fell; which then became his own, it being then assign'd to him. Where this Place or Province assign'd him was, is not recorded in Holy Scripture, nor doth Ecclesiastical History give us any clear account of it, or where he preach'd the Gospel. Only we read, that he continu'd at *Jerusalem*, till the Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles, to enable them for the Discharge of their Office; and then

he is thought to have spent the First-fruits of his Ministry in *Judea*, with great success: from whence, 'tis suppos'd, he afterward travel'd Eastward towards the Countries of *Ethiopia*. He was a zealous Assertor of Christ's Doctrine and Miracles, and a successful Propagator of the Gospel in all places where he went, tho he met sometimes with rude and barbarous People, that treated him with great Inhumanity.

The Time and Manner of his Death are variously reported, and little Certainty is to be had of either.

Some relate him to have been seiz'd by the Jews, and by them stoned as a Blasphemer: Others, that he was beheaded: Others again, that he was crucify'd. However that be, 'tis generally agreed, that after many Labours and great Sufferings, by which he converted many to Christianity, he at last obtain'd the Crown of Martyrdom.

This is a brief Account of the Life and Death of St. *Matthias*, as 'tis related in the Epistle for this Day and elsewhere. From whence we may learn a few remarkable Lessons: As,

1. From *Judas's* betraying his Master, and thence falling into Despair, and dispatching himself, we may learn, that there may be bad Servants even in Christ's Family, and of his own chusing; for *Judas* was immediately call'd by Christ himself, and equally empower'd and commission'd to preach the Gospel with the rest of the Apostles, and converted as many as they, and yet was a vile and wicked Person; to shew that the Badness of a Minister doth not null his Commission, or make his Office useless, and that the Efficacy of God's Ordinances depends not upon the Quality of the Persons that deliver them, but upon the Appointment of God, and the Blessing that attends, and is entail'd upon them. Moreover, from the Uneasiness and Terrors of *Judas's* guilty Conscience by reason of his Sin, let us learn to keep our Minds as much as possible free from all Guilt, which else will make us restless, and rob us of all that Quiet and Repose, which the best Condition in this Life can afford us; and likewise constantly to attend upon God's Ordinances, tho he who is call'd to administer them, be not always one of the best of Men.

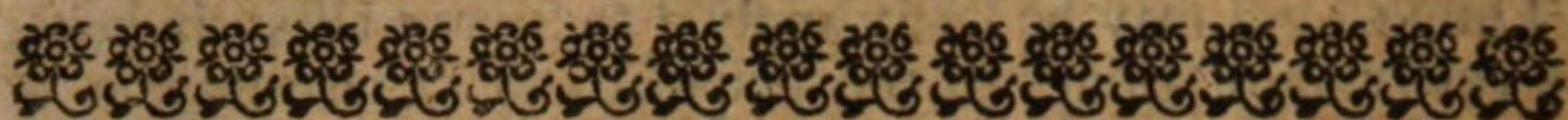
2. From God's appointing or allowing of Lots in the Election of *Matthias* to the Apostleship, we may learn, that

that Lots are not only lawful, but sometimes Sacred Things, and may be safely apply'd to Sacred Uses; it being a referring of things to the Disposal and Determination of God Almighty, which cannot by ordinary means be well decided. Only care must be taken, that we use them not in slight and trivial matters, that are not fit to be refer'd to so great a Judg; as also that they be not accompany'd with Charms and Enchantments, that refer them more to the Devil than to God.

3. From the Apostles praying to God, to direct their Choice to the fittest Person to succeed in that holy Office, we may learn, that all who seek for Holy Orders, should seriously examine themselves, whether they are moved herein by the Holy Ghost, and of their own Fitness to enter into so high and holy Calling. And likewise that the Governours of the Church should beg God Almighty's Guidance and Direction in so great an Affair, that they may wisely make choice of fit Labourers to work in God's Vineyard: And all good Christians are to join in such Prayers, in which the Welfare of their Souls are so much concern'd. To this our Church hath directed, in the Prayers to be used in the Ember-Weeks before Ordination.

In a word, we are taught to pray this Day, that by the Example of the Apostles in the Election of *Matthias*, the Church may be always preserv'd from false Apostles, and be ever order'd and guided by faithful and true Pastors. In doing whereof, we shall make a right Use of the Observation of this Festival: which God grant for the Merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*





DISCOURSE X.

The G O S P E L for St. *Matthias's* Day.

St. Matthew xi. 25, to the end.

At that time Jesus answer'd and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast reveal'd them unto Babes : Even so, Father, for so it seem'd good in thy sight. All things are deliver'd to me of my Father, &c.

TH E S E Words were pitch'd upon for the Gospel for this Day, perhaps because *Matthias* was a Person of mean Birth and obscure Parentage, and was instructed in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, and made choice of for an Apostle ; when Persons of greater Birth and Parts had not the Knowledg of those Divine Truths, nor were admitted to so high and sacred a Function.

In the Verses foregoing, our Saviour *upbraided the Cities wherein most of his mighty Works were done, because they repented not, nor believ'd on them ; denouncing many Woes against the rich Cities of Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, for despising his Doctrine and Miracles, when poorer Persons and Places gladly receiv'd and embrac'd him : which made him break out into this affectionate Expression of Thanks unto God, saying, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes :* meaning, that the Mysteries of the Gospel, which the wise and great Men of the World despis'd, being given up to their own wilful Blindness, were made known to the Humble and Meek, being illuminated by the Light of God's Holy Spirit ; and that God had so dispos'd the way to Heaven, that more of the meaner than higher sort walk in it, and what the Proud and the Learned wilfully re-

jected, was readily receiv'd by the more ignorant and unlearned World. This *St. Paul* likewise observ'd and acknowledg'd, *1 Cor. 1. 27. Ye see your Calling, Brethren, how that not many Wise Men after the Flesh, not many Mighty, not many Noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the World to confound the Wise, and God hath chosen the weak things to confound the things that are mighty; yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are.*

And this is here ascrib'd not to any Merit in the Persons or Things themselves, but only to the Favour and Good-pleasure of God: *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* Where his own Good-will is made the sole Motive of his distinguishing Mercy, and that 'tis an Act of his free undeserved Grace and Goodness to some, and of his just Displeasure and Desertion of others. We may not therefore challenge any thing by way of Desert, nor arrogate any Knowledg or Privilege we have above others to our selves or our own Merits, but merely to the Favour and Good-will of God. So *St. Paul* ascribes his *making known to us the Mystery of his Will, wholly unto his Good-pleasure, Eph. 1. 9.* for 'tis *he that worketh in us both to will and to do of his Good-pleasure, Phil. 2. 13.* If then God hath reveal'd more of the Mysteries of the Gospel and the Method of Salvation to us, than to greater Persons, let us not be lifted up, or think our selves better than they; but let us be humble under it, thankful for it, and make a right Use of it, otherwise it will aggravate and increase our Condemnation.

This our Saviour here farther illustrates and confirms in the next words, saying, *All things are deliver'd unto me by my Father:* meaning, that all Power is given unto him for the instructing, ruling, and saving of Mankind, and no Man can have any knowledg of him or his Father without him; for *no Man (saith he) knoweth the Son, but the Father:* that is, none can comprehend the Mysteries of his Person, or of his Mind and Will, but the Father, who is one with him; neither can any know or comprehend the Mind of the Father, but the Son who lay in his Bosom: the secret Transactions between them concerning Man's Salvation being known only to themselves, and *to such to whomsoever the Son shall reveal them.* The Manner and Measure of which Revelations are guided only by the Di-

vine Will and Pleasure ; from whence he infers those comfortable words in the following Verses, saying,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart, and ye shall find rest unto your Souls ; for my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light. Where we have,

First, A gracious Invitation made by our Saviour ; *Come unto me.*

Secondly, The Persons invited ; and they are, *All ye that labour and are heavy laden.*

Thirdly, A Promise of Ease and Benefit ; *And I will give you rest.*

Fourthly, The Way and Manner of coming unto Christ ; and that is, by *taking his Yoke upon them, and learning of him*, especially the great Lessons of *Meekness and Lowliness of Heart.*

Fifthly, A farther Encouragement hereunto, from an inward Sense and Feeling of the promis'd Rest ; *Ye shall find Rest unto your Souls.*

Lastly, A good Reason to back and enforce it ; *For my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light.* Of each of these briefly and particularly. And,

First, Of the gracious Invitation made by our Blessed Saviour, in those words, *Come unto me.* Where by coming unto Christ, is meant the coming unto him by Faith, or believing in him ; receiving him as a Saviour, and relying upon his Merits and Atonement for Salvation. Hence coming to Christ, and believing, are in Scripture used to signify one and the same thing : *He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him ;* Heb. 11. 6. *All that the Father giveth me (saith our Saviour) shall come unto me ; that is, shall believe in me : and he that thus cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* 'Tis sometimes express'd by receiving of him ; *As many as receiv'd him (saith St. John) to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believ'd on his Name ;* John 1. 12.

The first Step in our coming to Christ, is by Baptism : *Suffer little Children to come unto me, saith Christ ; that is, to be baptiz'd, to take my Name upon them, and to be receiv'd into my Family,*

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The next Step is by Prayer, which is often express'd by coming unto God: *He is the God that heareth Prayers* (saith the Psalmist) *and therefore to him shall all Flesh come,* for the supply of their Wants, and to find Grace to help in time of need.

Again, A farther Step in coming to God, is by Repentance and Confession of Sin; which is frequently call'd a coming or turning to him. Sin is a departing from God, and in every Transgression we go astray and revolt from him; and 'tis by Repentance we return and come back to him, from whom we have erred and strayed like lost Sheep.

Moreover, We are said to come to God by hearing his Word, and receiving Instructions from him: *You will not come to me* (saith our Saviour to the Jews) *that ye may have Life; i. e.* You will not receive my Doctrine, nor come to hear the Words of eternal Life, by which alone you can be saved. They that turn the deaf ear to God's Word, say in effect with those in *Job*, *Depart from us, we desire not the Knowledg of thy Ways.* But they that come to be taught by him, say with *Samuel*, *Speak Lord, for thy Servant heareth.*

Furthermore, We are said to come to Christ, by receiving his Holy Supper; for so the words of Invitation are, *Come, for all things are now ready.* To encourage us to come, he styles himself *the Bread of Life*; and tells us, that *he that cometh to him shall never hunger, and he that drinketh of this Cup shall never thirst: for his Flesh is Meat indeed, and his Blood is Drink indeed*; and both of them are able to nourish and cherish our Souls to eternal Life.

Lastly, We are to come to Christ, by putting our whole Trust and Affiance in him, relying upon him for Salvation, and placing all our Hopes and Confidence in his Merits and Satisfaction.

All this is imply'd in this Invitation, *Come unto me*; which, we see, is to believe in him, not with an idle, speculative, or ineffectual Faith, which rests in the Brain and goes no farther; but with an active operative Faith, that sinks into the Heart, and works by Love, in embracing, and closing with him. This is the Invitation.

But, *Secondly*, Who are the Persons invited? Why, that the next words will tell us, they are the weary and heavy-laden: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden;*

laden; that is, ye that labour under the Sense of your Sins, and are heavy-laden with the Weight of your Iniquities. Sin is indeed a very great and heavy Burden, yea, the worst and most intolerable of all Burdens; 'tis a Weight that lies heavy upon the Soul, and presses it sore. So *David* complain'd of it, *Psal.* 38. 4. *Mine Iniquities are gone over my Head, they are become a Burden too heavy for me to bear.* And afterward, he was troubled and bowed down greatly under the weight of them; which made him roar for the very Disquietness of his Heart, often saying, *Why art thou so vexed, O my Soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me?*

But the Heaviness of the Burden of Sin can in nothing be better seen, than in that unsupportable Load of Misery and Trouble it brought upon our Saviour: for when he took this Burden upon him, it made his Body sweat great Drops of Blood, and his Soul exceeding sorrowful unto Death; yea, it sunk the one into the Grave, and the other into Hell. And if every thing that presseth down be heavy, how heavy is that which presseth down to Hell? A Pressure sure, which none but the Son of God was able to bear.

Now Sin hath a double Weight in it, *viz.* a Weight of Guilt, and a Weight of Filth: the one consists in the Punishment due to it, and the other in the Pollution or Defilement that sticks to it.

Punishment is that gross Weight of Sin, that is soonest felt, and hardest to be endur'd or remov'd, being accompany'd with the Fears of Divine Vengeance, and the Terrors of a guilty Mind. This made *Cain* to complain that his Punishment was greater than he could bear: and *Judas*, from the intolerable Anguish and Despair of a guilty Conscience, went forth and hang'd himself.

As for the Filth and Pollution of Sin, tho it lays a heavy Load upon the Soul, it is not so tenderly felt as the Guilt of it; but yet is not therefore the less, but rather the more dangerous: for, as Physicians observe, those are most dangerously sick, that have the least Sense or Feeling of their Sickness; whereas to be sensible of Pain, is a sign that the Disease is not deadly. So in spiritual Maladies, the Evil is so much the greater, by how much it is thought the lesser. And therefore *David* reckon'd the Loathsomeness of Sin to be a great part of the Load and Burden of it: *My Wounds* (saith he) *stink and are corrupt through my Foolish-*

Foolishness. And the Prophet *Isaiah* describes the Sinner, from the Sole of the Foot to the Crown of the Head, to have no Soundness in him, nothing but Wounds, and Bruises, and putrefying Sores : which made the Psalmist pray as much to be purg'd from the Foulness, as to be pardon'd of the Heinousness of his Sins ; as we read, *Psal.* 51. 2, 7. & *Psal.* 38. *Isa.* 1. 6. Hence the same Prophet speaks of Sinners, as a Seed of Evil-doers, laden with Iniquity ; ver. 4. And St. Paul, speaking of some silly seduc'd Women, affirms them to be laden with Sin, and led away with divers Lusts ; 2 Tim. 3. 6. If Sin then be so heavy, how comes it to pass that many make so light of it ? Why, this proceeds partly from Inconsideration, or not weighing Matters aright ; partly from the Temptations and Suggestions of our Ghostly Enemies, who hide from Men the sight of the greatest Evils ; and partly from the Deceitfulness of Sin, which hardens their Hearts, and makes them insensible of the heaviest Load that can lay upon them.

But who are they who are here said to labour and be heavy laden ? Why, they are all such as feel the weight of their Sins, and earnestly desire to be rid of it. He that finds any great Burden pressing hard upon him, will labour and groan under it, and be very willing to have it remov'd. In like manner, he that is sensible of the great Load of Guilt and Shame that attends his Iniquities, that feels the Loathsomeness as well as the Heinousness of them, will gladly be rid of both : And these are the Persons that our Saviour here calls upon to come to him ; not such as are harden'd in their Impieties, and feel no Remorse for them, but such as are griev'd and weary'd with the Burden of their Sins, and long to have it taken from them : *Come unto me all ye that thus labour and are heavy laden.* And to encourage them to come, here is,

Thirdly, A Promise of Ease and Rest, *And I will give you Rest.* Rest and Peace, or Quietness of Mind, is one of the greatest Blessings we can attain on this side of Heaven ; for it gives us a Freedom from Molestation and Trouble, and likewise such an Ease, Satisfaction, and Tranquillity of Mind, as is an Earnest or Foretaste of the Felicity of Heaven. This none but God can give us, the World can give us Trouble and Tribulation, and Sin evermore raises a Storm in the Breast that harbours it ; but 'tis God only that can still this Tempest, and bring Calmness and

and Serenity into the Soul: *I create the Fruit of the Lips, Peace*, saith God Almighty, *Isa. 57. 19.* and this he here promises to all that come to him, *I will give you Rest.*

Fourthly, But how are we to come to Christ to obtain this Blessing? Why, that the next words will tell; *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* Where by taking his Yoke upon us, is meant the obeying of his Precepts; and by learning of him, is meant the following of his Example, especially in the Vertues of Meekness and Humility.

1. I say, to come to Christ, is to take the Yoke of his Precepts upon us, by doing his Will, and keeping his Commandments. This is call'd a Yoke, not for the Heaviness or Burdensomness of it, to gall the Necks of his Followers; for St. *John* declares, that *his Commandments are not grievous*: But in allusion to the Ceremonial Law of *Moses*, which consisting in many cumbersome Rites and Sacrifices, is by St. *Peter* stil'd a Yoke, which neither they nor their Forefathers were able to bear. This Yoke he is so far from willing us to take upon us, that he hath taken it off from us, having blotted out the Hand-writing of Ordinances that was against us, and nail'd it to his Cross. But his Yoke is only that of the Moral Law, which contains the Dictates of natural Light, and is agreeable to the best Reason and Interest of Mankind: And of that too he hath taken away the Rigour and the Curse, and laid on us only the gentle Yoke of Faith and Repentance. From this we are not to draw our Necks out of the Collar, but willingly and readily to take it upon us, not thinking that Christ hath done all for us, and left us nothing to do; but we must do our part, and *work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.* And as we are to come to him by taking the Yoke of Obedience upon us; so are we,

2. To learn of him the great Lessons of Meekness and Humility: *Learn of me* (saith he) *for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* Of these Vertues Christ was the highest Pattern, and hath given us the lowest Instances; for tho he was the Son of God, yet he became a Servant to Men: *I am among you* (saith he) *as one that serveth.* And the Apostle wills, that *the same Mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who being in the Form of God, humbled himself to the* Like.

Likeness of Men, and took upon him the Form of a Servant; Phil. 2. 5, 6. Meekness and Lowliness of Heart are the chief Parts of that Yoke that Christ would have us learn of him to put on, they being two such Dispositions of Mind, as render it pliable and fit to receive and wear the Yoke of Christ. Now tho Meekness and Lowliness in Scripture often signify the same thing, yet some have distinguish'd them into two Vertues: Lowliness signifying our humble Duty and Devotion towards God, and Meekness our becoming and condescending Service and Carriage towards Men; the one including the Duties of the first Table, and the other of the second. Others again, by Meekness, understand the Humility of the Soul, and by Lowliness the Humility of the Body; and by both such a Tameness and Tractableness of Spirit, as dispose Men to put their Neck into the Collar, and to take the Yoke upon them.

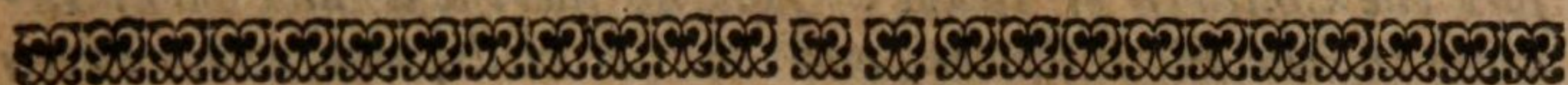
Fifthly, This is what we are here bid, from Christ's Example, to learn and labour for, with a farther Encouragement, of *finding Rest to our Souls.* We had before a Promise of Christ's *giving us Rest*, and we have here a Promise of our *finding* and feeling of it. By coming unto Christ, he will give Ease and Rest; and by taking his Yoke upon us, we shall find and feel our selves eas'd: for Christ first wore this Yoke himself for our sakes, to make it the more portable and possible for us to wear it; the main weight still resting upon his Shoulders, that we may experiment the Truth of his Promise, and find Ease and Rest unto our Souls. And this will lead to the

Last and great Motive here urg'd to come to Christ, and take his Yoke upon us, from the Lightness and Gentleness of it; *For my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light.* This will be found by Experience by all that will try and venture upon them: for Christ's Precepts are infinitely just and righteous, highly agreeable to the Nature, Reason, and true Interest of Mankind; our Obedience to them is a holy, acceptable, and reasonable Service, and the contrary Practice utterly repugnant and destructive of all these: which may abundantly satisfy us of the *Easiness of Christ's Yoke, and the Lightness of his Burden.* Which will further appear,

If we compare it either with the Worship of the Heathens, which consisted in many barbarous and bloody Sacrifices; or with the Law of *Moses*, which was attended with a heavy and burdensom Yoke of Rites and Ceremonies, that were laid on the Necks of the Jews, and is by Christ taken off from ours; or, lastly, with the contrary Course of a loose and sinful Life, which is attended with the vilest Drudgeries that can be put upon the greatest Vassals: whereas Christ's Service is perfect Freedom, *his Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all his Paths are Peace. Great Peace have they that keep thy Law* (saith the Psalmist) *and nothing shall offend them.* So that well might St. John say, that *God's Commandments are not grievous*; and our Saviour, that *his Yoke is easy, and his Burden not only light, but delightfom.*

Let none then draw back from coming to Christ, upon the account of any Uneasiness in his Service; or decline the ways of Religion, upon any pretended Difficulties in them: but rather let us all resolve to come speedily, chearfully, and thorowly unto him; and then we shall find Rest to our Souls here, and everlasting Peace and Rest hereafter: Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XI.

The EPISTLE for the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Isa. vii. 10—16.

Moreover, the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a Sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the Depth, or in the Height above: But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O House of David, &c.

THE great Business of this Day's Festival, is to celebrate the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; by which is meant, the Declaration made to her by an Angel, of her being the Mother of the promis'd Messias, together with the Glory, Greatness, and everlasting Duration of his Kingdom. Which things are this Day commemorated, both in the Prophecy of them in the Old Testament, and in the Accomplishment of them in the New: The former is contain'd in the Epistle, the latter in the Gospel for this Day.

Of the first of these at this time, from these words of the Prophet *Isaias*, *The Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a Sign, &c.* In which, and the following words, we have a Prophecy of the Birth of the Messias, of his Virgin-Mother, together with his Name, and some other Circumstances that attended his Person; all which were mystically represented, perhaps in the Person of another, born much in the like manner. Now this *Ahaz* here spoken of and spoken to, was one of the Kings of *Judah*, the Son of *Jotham*, and the Father of *Hezekiah*, two good Kings, tho he himself was a bad one; for he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his Father, but walk'd in the way of the Kings of Israel; yea, and made his Son to pass thorow the Fire, according to the

the Abomination of the Heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the Children of Israel: And he sacrific'd and burnt Incense in the High Places, and on the Hills, and under every green Tree. 2 Kings 16. 2, 3, 4.

When *Rezin* King of *Syria*, and others, came up against *Jerusalem*, and besieg'd *Ahaz*; he, to gain Help from the King of *Assyria*, made a sacrilegious Present to him of the *Silver and Gold*, that was in the *House of the Lord*: which thing, instead of procuring a Blessing, prov'd a Curse to him; as we read at large, *2 Chron. 28*. Now *Ahaz*, it seems, was a Man of little Faith, and would not believe what the Prophets had told him concerning the Birth of a Child, without a Sign to confirm the Truth of it; like those in the Gospel, of whom our Saviour speaks, *Except ye see Signs and Wonders, ye will not believe*: and therefore the Lord spake to *Ahaz*, and said, *Ask thee a Sign of the Lord thy God, ask it either in the Depth, or in the Height above*: that is, either in the Earth below, or in the Heavens above, which were the only Places where Signs were wont to be given, the better to remove his Doubts, and to satisfy him of the Truth of what was told him.

To which he reply'd, *I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord*: which Answer proceeded not from any Modesty or Reverence he had for God, tho he cover'd it with a Pretence of not tempting the Lord his God, which could not be, in doing what he bid him; but from Hypocrisy and Dissimulation, wherewith he cover'd his Unbelief and Contempt of God's Promises, to which he gave no Credence, nor desir'd any Satisfaction. But God Almighty, offended with his Falshood and Distrust, said unto him by the Prophet *Isaiah*, *Hear ye now, O House of David! is it a small thing to weary Men, but will ye weary my God also?*

The Preface, *Hear ye now*, with which the Prophet ushers in his Saying, signifies it to be a Matter of great Importance, and fit to be hearken'd to. And because *Ahaz* was of the Lineage and Family of *David*, he calls upon the House of *David* to hear and receive his Message, which was to upbraid their Ingratitude and Infidelity in the Person of *Ahaz*: for tho God had bestow'd many Mercies and Blessings on his Servant *David*, and made many and great Promises to his Seed; yet *Ahaz*, who was descended from that Stock, and whom God had made King over his People, was utterly regardless and unmindful of the Favours

vours shew'd to him, and made no Returns futable to the Grace and Mercy vouchsaf'd unto him.

The Terms in which the Prophet upbraided him, were these, *Is it a small thing for you to weary Men, but will ye weary my God also?* *Abaz* had weary'd Men with his Tyrannies and Oppressions, and laden his People with heavy Burdens and hard Dealings: And the Prophet asks the Question, whether it were not enough thus to grieve and weary his Subjects, but must he try and tire out the Patience of God too, by repeated Refusals of the Offers of his Mercy? Was it too light a matter thus to trouble and afflict Men, but must you go higher, and so evilly intreat your Maker? Of this God himself complains, *Isa. 43. 24. Ye have made me to serve with your Sins, and have weary'd me with your Iniquities.*

But as there God Almighty shew'd the Freeness of his Grace, in pardoning their Sins, and overlooking their Iniquities, saying, in the next words, *I am he that blotteth out thy Transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy Sins;* ver. 25. so here, tho *Abaz* was not sensible of his lack of a Redeemer, and lightly esteem'd the Promises made to that purpose; yet I will awaken him with a Sign, and raise his Thoughts to that great Salvation, stor'd up for his People in the Messiah.

Therefore the Lord himself (saith the Prophet) *shall give you a Sign;* that is, seeing *Abaz* would not ask a Sign when God bid him, the Lord will give one of his own proper Motion, for the Comfort and Confirmation of his People: And this Sign is in the following words, *Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel.* The Child here mention'd and promis'd, is by some thought to be literally meant of a Child to be born in an unusual manner, as a Sign or Token of some temporal Deliverance at that time waited for and expected; and this Child is mention'd, ver. 16. and in the following Chapter. But the Prophet here considers and applies it, in a mystical sense, to the Birth of the Messias, and so 'tis expounded and referr'd to in the New Testament: In which sense 'tis a Prophecy of the glad Tidings of the Gospel, or a Message of the happiest News that ever sounded in the Ears of the Sons of Men, to wit, of the Birth and Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour. The manner whereof was here foretold by the Prophet, many hundred years before it came to pass: *Behold, saith he, a Virgin*

Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, &c. which being the Annunciation of the Message we remember this Day, must be here spoken to.

It begins with that Note of Attention and Admiration, *Behold!* which, like *John the Baptist*, usher'd in the glad Tidings of a Saviour; and being never prefix'd but to Matters of extraordinary Consequence, serves to prepare the World for his Reception.

The Prophecy or Message consists of three Parts or Branches; namely, the Conception and Birth of the Messiah, together with the Name by which he was to be call'd: Of which I must say something here in the Prophecy, and more after in the Accomplishment. And,

1st, Of his Conception, *Behold, a Virgin shall conceive.* That the Son of God, who was begotten of the Father before all Worlds, should in time be conceiv'd in the Womb, cannot but seem strange and unaccountable; and that he should be conceiv'd too in the Womb of a Virgin, cannot but add much to the Wonder, and stand in need of a Sign to make it credible: However, seeing he that is Truth it self, and to whom nothing is impossible, hath reveal'd it to us, we have a firm Foundation for our Faith, and abundant Reason to believe it; especially since in the Gospel for this Day we find this Prophecy of it actually fulfill'd in the *Virgin Mary*, as we shall see after.

2dly, This Prophecy foretels the Birth, as well as the Conception of the Messiah, and both of a pure Virgin; *Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son.* That a Virgin, continuing such, should conceive, is strange and miraculous; but that she should bring forth too, is more wonderful: And yet both are here prophetically and punctually foretold. Yea, this same Prophet, in *chap. 9. ver. 6, 7.* speaks so plainly of his Birth, as of a thing actually perform'd in his Days, tho it came not to pass a long time after; saying, *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the Government shall be upon his Shoulders; of the Increase of his Government and Peace there shall be no end, upon the Throne of David and upon his Kingdom, to order it and establish it with Judgment and Justice, from henceforth even for ever.* That this is meant of the Messiah, not only the concurrent Testimony of Expositors, but the lofty Titles given to him, and the great things spoken of him plainly manifest, being both such as cannot agree with or be apply'd to any other. And tho the Prophet seems to relate

relate a History of him, as of one born in his time ; yet that 'twas only a Prophecy of something future, is plain from what is added in the Close, *The Zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this* : meaning, that God's Faithfulness to his Promises would surely bring this thing to pass ; which they therefore as firmly believ'd, as if they had liv'd to see him actually born. The first Promise of him declar'd, that he was to be *the Seed of the Woman*, Gen. 3. 15. and the Prophecy in the Text, that he was to be the Offspring of a Virgin, and her too to proceed from the Seed of *Abraham*, and the Lineage of *David* : Of which things the Gospel for the Day will shew us the Accomplishment.

3dly, This Prophecy foretels the Name of this promis'd Messias, and that is, *Immanuel* ; *A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel* : which is an *Hebrew* Name, interpreted by St. *Matthew*, to be *God with us*. And this we shall find afterward fulfill'd in his assuming our Nature ; for by taking our Flesh into so near an Union with the Godhead, he might be properly said to be *God with us* : which Name was afterward turn'd into that of *Jesus*, as we read, *Mat. 1. 21*.

Indeed many and great are the Names and Titles given to this sacred Person in Holy Scripture : In the Prophecy of *Jacob*, Gen. 49. he is call'd by the name of *Shiloh* ; which signifies *one sent*, because he was to be sent for the Redemption of Mankind.

In this Prophecy of *Isaias*, we read in the 9th Chap. ver. 6, 7. that *his Name should be call'd wonderful* ; not only for the Wonders of his Conception and Nativity, but for the many wonderful Works that were to be done by him.

In the same Place he is call'd *the Counsellor* ; partly for his being privy to all his Father's Counsels, as lying in his Bosom ; and partly for his revealing to us the whole Counsel and Will of God, to direct us in the ways of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter.

Again, he is stil'd *the mighty God* ; having all Might and Power originally in himself, and giving it in what Measures and Proportions he pleaseth unto others.

Moreover, he is in the same Prophecy stil'd, *The everlasting Father*, or as some Translations render it, *The Father of the Age to come* ; that is, the Father of all that believe, and the Author of that Salvation which shall be reveal'd in the latter Age. And,

Lastly, He is there call'd, *The Prince of Peace*; not only for that general Peace that was throughout the World at the time of his coming into it, but because he is the great Peace-maker between God and Man, or the Ambassador sent from Heaven, to treat and conclude a Peace between Heaven and Earth, and make a firm League of Amity and Reconciliation with our Maker: And therefore the Angels immediately upon his Birth proclaim'd *Peace on Earth*, at the coming of this Prince of Peace into the World. These were the principal Names or Titles given by that Prophet to this great Person.

The Prophet *Jeremiah* foretold, that his Name should be call'd, *The Lord our Righteousness*, Jer. 23. 6. Of which Name *St. Paul* hath given both the Reason and the Accomplishment, because *he is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption*; 1 Cor. 1. 30. He was to fulfil all *Righteousness* in his own Person, and to clothe us with the Robes of his Righteousness for our Justification, and so might be call'd, *The Lord our Righteousness*.

The Prophet *Haggai* styles him, *The Desire of all Nations*, Chap. 2. 7. which was fulfill'd in that longing Desire and Expectation the World was in of him, both before and at the time of his Coming, when it was in every one's Mouth, *Where is he that should come?*

The Prophet *Malachi* styles him, *The Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, or the Messenger of the Covenant, whom they delighted in*; with a Promise, that he should come and bring with him the best Message that was ever sent to Mankind; *Mal. 4. 1.*

In short, he is both by *Moses* and *Malachi* the first and the last of the Prophets, stil'd, that great Prophet that was to come into the World, to reform, to instruct, and to save it: *A Prophet will the Lord your God raise up like unto me* (saith *Moses*) *and to him shall ye hearken*; Deut. 18. 15. And, ver. 18. God himself gives them the same Promise, saying, *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren, like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all the Words that I shall command him.* And in the New Testament we find the People often saying of our Saviour, upon the sight of his Miracles, *Of a truth this is that great Prophet that was to come into the World.* Thus we see the antient Prophecys, relating to the Incarnation of the Son of God, or what the Prophets of old declar'd concerning the Conception and Nati-
vity

vity of the Messiah, the glad Tidings of this Day, together with the Names and Titles given to him in the Old Testament.

We see it was reveal'd to the Prophets, that he should be born of a Woman, and by taking our Nature and Flesh, he might become one of us, to make an Atonement for our Sins; and that the same Nature that had offended, might make Satisfaction to Divine Justice: as also that the same Sex, which unhappily occasion'd our Fall, and the Miseries that attended it, might in some measure contribute to our Rise and Restoration. For *Eve* was first beguil'd by the Serpent, and then *Adam* was beguil'd by *Eve*; so that the Woman being first in the Transgression, that brought Death and Ruin on Mankind, it was most fit that she should not be the last or the least in the Reparation.

Again, the Prophets foresaw and foretold, that as the Messiah was to be born of a Woman, so was he to proceed from one that was a pure Virgin, to preserve all Purity both in his Conception and Birth; and most fit it was, that since he vouchsaf'd to be born, he should be fashion'd in a Womb that was unpolluted: for if the Disciples thought it expedient, that his *dead Body should be laid in a Tomb or Sepulchre, where never Man was laid before*; as we read, *John 19. 41.* how much more decent was it that his living Body should be conceiv'd in a Womb, where no Man else had lain?

Moreover, the Prophets foretold the Greatness of his Person and Character, that the *Government should be upon his Shoulders, and that his Name should be call'd Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*; that of the Increase of his Government there should be no End, but it should be establish'd for ever: *Isa. 9. 6, 7.*

These Prophecies of the Old Testament touching the Messiah, couch'd in the Epistle for this Day, receiv'd their punctual Accomplishment under the New; of which we have an Account in the following Gospel next to be treated of: In the mean time, from the foregoing Discourse we may learn,

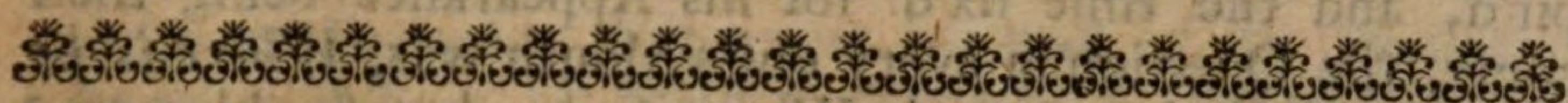
1. To magnify and meditate upon the great Goodness of God, in revealing a Saviour to the Patriarchs and Prophets so long before his Coming, to the end that they might believe in and be sav'd by a Messiah to come, and we the better receive and be confirm'd in him when he came. He

was reveal'd to *Adam* quickly after the Fall, in those words, *The Seed of the Woman shall bruise the Serpent's Head*, Gen. 3. meaning, that one born of a Woman should destroy the Power of the Devil that first beguil'd them. After that he was reveal'd to *Abraham*: *In thy Seed* (saith he) *shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed*; that is, by the Birth of one descended from his Stock: And *Abraham* is said to have *seen this Day of his Saviour, and to be glad*. He was reveal'd to *Moses* by the name of a great Prophet, to be rais'd up to instruct and redeem his People: But *Moses* had a Veil over his Face, his Revelations were obscure, and clouded under Types and Shadows; and generally under the Old Testament they saw thro the Glass of Prophecy but darkly, whereas we see him as it were Face to Face.

2. From the Son of God's vouchsafing to be born of a Woman, we may learn the Lessons of Humility and Condescension to one another; *Learn of me* (saith Christ) *for I am meek and lowly in Heart*. Indeed none was ever so high, and yet none ever made himself so low for our sake; which may teach us, if we are his Disciples, to stoop and condescend to one another.

Lastly, from the Messias's being born of a pure Virgin, we may learn all Purity both of Life and Doctrine, to cleanse our selves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God; for none but the pure in Heart shall see God: And that we may have this Hope, let us purify our selves, even as he is pure. Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XII.

The GOSPEL for the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin.

St. Luke i. 26 ——— 38.

And in the sixth Month, the Angel Gabriel was sent by God unto a City of Galilee, nam'd Nazareth, to a Virgin espous'd to a Man, whose Name was Joseph, of the House of David; and the Virgin's Name was Mary. And the Angel came in unto her, and said, Hail! thou that art highly favour'd, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among Women, &c.

THE Mercy we commemorate this Day, is the happy News of the Conception and Birth of a Saviour, which we are to consider both in the Prophecies of it in the Old Testament, and the fulfilling of it in the New: The former is contain'd in the Epistle, the latter in the Gospel for this Day.

Of the famous Prophecy of it in *Isaiah*, contain'd in the Epistle for the Day, *viz. Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel*, that is, by Interpretation, *God with us*; I spake the last time. Of the fulfilling of it, contain'd in the Gospel for this Day, I am now to treat: in which we are to observe,

First, The Message or glad Tidings of this great Birth.

Secondly, The Messenger that brought this happy News.

Thirdly, The Charge that was given thereupon, together with the Manner and many Circumstances that attended each.

First, For the Message, that was the happy Tidings of the Birth of the Messias, who was then earnestly expected;

ted; for the Date of the Prophecies of him being then expir'd, and the time fix'd for his Appearance being then come, the Question in every one's Mouth was, *Where is he that should be born?* and, *Where is he that should come?* They were at it at every turn, as we read, *Mat. 2. & Luke 2.*

But whilst the World was thus intent, and even upon the rack of Expectation, behold a Messenger was dispatch'd from Heaven, to let them know when, and where, and of whom this Saviour should be born, of which we have an account in this Gospel.

1. It begins with the Time of the Delivery of this Message, which was *in the sixth Month*, that is, after *Elizabeth's Conception of John the Baptist*, as we read, *ver. 36.* which Conception of *John* was a Token or Forerunner of that of *Jesus*, as the one was after the Harbinger of the other.

2. The Place where this Message was deliver'd was *Nazareth*, a poor contemptible City in *Galilee*, despis'd for its Meanness; a Place far remote from the Royal City and Temple, from the noble Tribe of *Judah*, and the Lineage of *David*, from whom the *Messias* was expected: and beside all this, a Place of extraordinary Darknes and Ignorance, where the People were said to *sit in Darkness, and in the Region and Shadow of Death*; *Mat. 4. 15, 16.* And yet this remote ignoble Region was made choice of for the Habitation and Education of the Son of God, and Lord of all the Earth; which was done to subdue all boasting of the Nobleness of our City or Country, and likewise to shew the Efficacy of God's Grace and Power, in making the greatest Light to abound in Places of the greatest Obscurity and Darknes: for God delights to manifest his Power in Man's Weakness, to make Light to spring out of Darknes, and to exalt Humility above all the Pride and Vanity of the World.

3. The Person that brought this News was an Angel, one of the blessed Spirits of Heaven; *The Angel Gabriel was sent from God, &c.* And from this Divine Messenger we may learn the Excellence and Dignity, the Difficulty and seeming Incredibility, together with the undoubted Truth and Certainty of the Message.

Secondly, The Messenger that brought this News, bespeaks the exceeding great Dignity and Importance of the

the Message; for God Almighty never employs any of that high and eminent Rank of Creatures upon mean and ordinary Errands. Wherever we read of his sending an Angel to deliver his Mind to the World, 'tis always about Matters of very great Weight and Moment; as might be shew'd in the Messages brought by Angels to *Abraham*, *Lot*, *Moses*, and others in the Old Testament, and such was that brought by the Angel *Gabriel* on this Day; a Message fit only for the Tongue of an Angel to relate, and above the Head of any Mortal to comprehend.

Again, The seeming Difficulty and Incredibility of the Message, require the Embassy of an Angel to deliver it; for had any mortal Man related it, he might perhaps have rais'd Wonder, but never have gain'd Belief. The Miracles of the Incarnation were so great and astonishing, that none would have given credit to them from any inferior Relation: that a Virgin, remaining such, should be a Mother, and the Mother of her Lord too; that, beyond all Example, she should conceive the Son of God, and be the Parent of her Saviour; that he, who inhabited Eternity, should inhabit our mortal Flesh; and tho the Heaven of Heavens was not sufficient to contain him, yet should be contain'd in the narrow Limits of a Virgin's Womb: These are Miracles that seem to crack our Faculties to conceive them, and would much more puzzle the Faith of Mankind to believe them, if they had not been supported by so Divine a Revelation. *Nicodemus* wonder'd how it was possible for a Man to be born again when he was old, or to enter the second time into his Mother's Womb and be born; but how much greater wonder is it that he should be born, who was far older than all Time, and thus find a Passage into the World, who had a Being long before the World had any? that Eternity should begin to be, and the Antient of Days become an Infant of a Span long? These are Matters which Flesh and Blood could never reveal, nor scarce receive when reveal'd; and therefore a celestial Messenger was imploy'd to bring the Tidings of them: In a word, one of the Heavenly Host, that attend the Throne of God, was thought fittest to deliver these great Truths, which else would have appear'd too big for human Understanding or Belief; whereas an Angel's bringing them from God, may fully assure us of their undoubted Truth and Certainty: so that we may well receive them

upon so high and heavenly Authority, and safely build the Hopes of Salvation upon the Truth of them.

But to whom was the Angel *Gabriel* sent with this Message? Why that, we are here told, was to a *Virgin espous'd to a Man, whose Name was Joseph, of the House of David, and the Virgin's Name was Mary*: To let her know that she was that blessed Woman that was chosen and singled out of all her Sex to be the Mother of the Son of God. The Angel brought not this News to any great or noble Personage, eminent for her high Extraction or Quality; nor was this extraordinary Embassy dispatch'd to any Queen or Princess, that the Messiah should descend from her: no, but the Virgin that was to be Christ's Mother, was *Mary*, a poor mean Daughter of *Israel*, a lowly Handmaiden, as she styles her self, lowly in her Mind, and low in her Estate and Condition: which made one, on this occasion, to cry out, Lord, how thou despisest those things which in the Opinion of the World seem great and honourable! How thou delightest to humble the Pride of the World, and to dignify and exalt the most excellent Grace of Humility, in passing by the Queens and Empresses of the Earth, and vouchsafing to be born of one of a mean Parentage and low Condition; which made her say in the *Magnificat*, that *he putteth down the Mighty from their Seat, and exalteth the Humble and Meek*.

Of this astonishing News the Angel *Gabriel* gives her solemn Notice, *ver. 31*. But before he delivers his Message, from the great Honour our Saviour was about to do her, he addresses to her in this affectionate Salutation, *Hail! thou that art highly favour'd, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among Women*: which words may be understood, either as a Declaration of the high Honour and Privileges of the blessed Virgin, or as a Form of Salutation, to congratulate her upon the News of her wonderful Conception, and wishing her all Joy and Happiness thereupon. In both which senses she appears to be a great Favourite of Heaven, who blessed the Earth with a Saviour, for whom all Generations shall call her blessed.

Hail! thou art highly honour'd, saith the Angel; that is, highly honour'd, say some; highly accepted or beloved, say others; highly ennobled and exalted, say all: and so indeed she was, upon the account of our blessed Lord's Incarnation, and likewise upon the account of those excel-

lent

lent Graces and Vertues, with which she was in an eminent manner dignify'd and endow'd.

1. She was highly favour'd upon the account of our blessed Lord's Incarnation. When the Son of God vouchsaf'd to come down from Heaven, to be born into the World, and to be cloth'd with our Nature, the Virgin *Mary* was that blessed Woman in whom this Mystery of the Incarnation was to be transacted; so the Angel told her, saying, *Thou hast found favour with God, and behold thou shalt conceive in thy Womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his Name Jesus*: And how singularly gracious must she be unto God, and dignify'd above all her Sex, who was to carry Divinity in her Womb, and to be the Mother of God? *Moses* indeed had the Honour of *talking with God, as a Man talketh with his Friend*; but that is nothing to the bearing of God within her, and bringing him forth into the World. We read also of some who *have put on Christ*, and others, who *have Christ form'd in them*, Gal. 3. 17. & Chap. 4. 19. but both these are meant only in a spiritual sense; whereas the blessed Virgin was the Person alone of all the World, in whom the *Fulness of the Godhead resided bodily*. She alone was design'd to that high Honour to which no other Creature ever arriv'd, viz. to have a God to be her Son, to partake of her Substance, to be nourish'd with her Milk, to hang on her Breasts, and to be carry'd in her Arms: Lord, what shall we say! She is herein inexpressibly above Saints or Angels. God cannot (saith a Father) create a greater Creature than such a Virgin-Mother; he can indeed make more and greater Worlds, but to make a greater Mother than the Mother of God, is perfectly impossible.

2. She was highly favour'd upon the account of the many excellent Graces and Vertues that were given to and shin'd in her: not that she was perfectly free from all Sin original and actual, as some would have her, we dare not go so far; but she was endow'd and adorn'd with many singular Graces, which shew'd, that *the Lord was with her, and that she was blessed among and above Women*. The History of the Annunciation gives us an account of some of her eminent Graces: as,

(1.) Of her unspotted Chastity, she was a *Virgin that knew not Man*, ver. 34. and so was free from all carnal Uncleaness and Pollution; both her Mind and Body were entirely pure and immaculate, not sullied by any fleshly or

or sensual Lusts, but fill'd with the Holy Ghost, and so a fit a Temple for the God of all Purity to inhabit.

Again, (2.) Her Modesty and Humility were signal and remarkable: which Vertues were express'd by her Carriage toward the Angel; for *when she saw him, she was troubled at his Saying, and cast in her mind what manner of Salutation this should be; ver. 29. She was troubled at his Saying: Poor Virgin!* saith one descanting on those words, the Angel's Salutation was in all its Circumstances too big for her Modesty. The Address (as she thought) was every way unsuitable to a Woman of her low Rank and Condition in the World. For an Angel clad in Robes of Glory to come and visit such a poor mean Daughter of *Israel*, as she was, how can it be that Heaven should find any thing in her above all other Women, that might incline God thus to favour and honour her? She blushes at the Angel's Address, and sees and hears her self highly magnify'd, she knows not why. She thinks and ruminates upon the Message, considers it again and again; and after all cannot apprehend any thing in her self, that might answer so high a Character.

Such was her great Modesty and Humility, that she could not conceive the meaning of the Angel's Salutation, nor think her self worthy or capable of the great things mention'd in it. But the Angel, to confirm her in the Belief of what was told her, bids her, in the next words, *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God: The Lowliness of thy Mind and Condition is so far from an hindrance to thy Advancement, that they have rais'd thee the higher in the Esteem of Heaven. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy Womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his Name Jesus: He shall be great, and shall be call'd the Son of the Highest, and the Lord shall give unto him the Throne of his Father David, and he shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end:* meaning, that he whom she bare, should have a spiritual Kingdom settled upon him, of which the temporal Kingdom of *David* was but a Figure or faint Representation; for he should have the absolute Government of the Church, and reign in the Hearts of his People for ever.

But still the holy Maid not fathoming the Depth of this Mystery, modestly asks the Angel, *How this could be without the knowledg of a Man?* or how she, being a Virgin, should

should conceive? To which the Angel reply'd, that she should conceive this Child not by Man, but by God himself: for *the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and the Power of the Most High should overshadow her; therefore also that Holy Thing which should be born of her, should be call'd the Son of God.* Amazing News! and such as was able to puzzle the Faith of any Mortal! And therefore the Angel, to confirm his Speech and her Faith, gave her a Sign in her Cousin *Elizabeth*, saying in the next words, *Behold, thy Cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceiv'd a Son in her Old Age, and this is the sixth Month with her who was call'd barren*: meaning, that she who was a long time noted for Barrenness, and then too much over-aged for Children, was now six months gone of such a supernatural Conception: adding withal, that *with God nothing is impossible.* He who had sent her the Message, was abundantly able to perform it, how strange or difficult soever it might appear to her. Whereupon she submitted her Reason to Faith, and humbly acquiesced in the Truth of what the Angel had told her, without any farther Doubt or Contradiction: *Behold* (saith she) freely resigning up her self to the Divine Pleasure, *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord! be it unto me according to thy Word.* She no longer stagger'd at the Word of God through Unbelief, but like *Abraham* was strong in Faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promis'd, he was able also to perform. And so she rested assured, that what she had heard must and would be, tho she knew not how: and being thus satisfy'd in the Message, *the Angel departed from her.* After which, she found all that was told her in due time punctually fulfill'd to her, and accomplish'd in her to a tittle.

This is briefly the History of the Annunciation, which is fraught with so many Miracles of Mercy, as may well swallow us up with Astonishment and Admiration. The Use that I shall make of this Discourse, shall be,

1. To call upon us to give God the Glory of his Wisdom, Power, and Goodness in this great Transaction. Let us admire his infinite Wisdom in contriving this way of Salvation for us, by sending his Son to take our Nature, to satisfy for our Sins; a Method which no Wit of Man or Angel could ever invent.

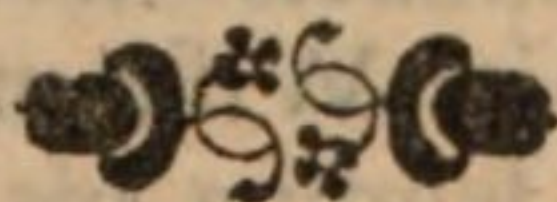
Next,

Next, Let us adore his infinite Power in effecting that, which no human Power or Policy could ever bring to pass. And,

Lastly, Let us magnify his transcendent Mercy and Goodness, in revealing and conferring that Favour and Felicity upon us, which we of our selves could never compass or obtain.

2. From the Virgin *Mary's* being dignify'd above all other Women to be the Mother of God, we may learn to give her the highest degrees of civil Honour and Respect, which are justly due to her upon that account; that is, to think and speak honourably of her upon all occasions, and never to mention her Name without the Title of *Blessed*. 'Twas her own Prediction, *From henceforth all Generations shall call me Blessed*. 'Twas begun by an Angel, who saluted her with that high Compellation, *Blessed art thou among Women*. 'Twas follow'd by her Cousin *Elizabeth*, who cry'd with a loud Voice, *Blessed art thou among Women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb*; ver. 42. And the Church hath ever since honour'd her with the Titles of the *Blessed* and *Ever-blessed* Virgin. And indeed we cannot shew too great a Regard and Reverence to this Mother of our Saviour, so long as we give her not that Worship that is due to our Lord himself. And therefore care must be taken, that as we come not short of all due Respect to her, so that we do not exceed, by falling into any extravagant Addresses or Adorations of her: But let us retain the Language of Antiquity; *Let the Mother be honoured, and the Son worshipped*.

Lastly, Let us preserve the Memory of the Incarnation, and celebrate the good News of this Day with Joy and Rejoicing. *Abraham* saw this Day afar off, and was glad; he rejoic'd in a promis'd Messiah: how much more should we be glad at a God manifest in the Flesh? singing Praises to God the Father, and receiving the Son with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.





DISCOURSE XIII.

The EPISTLE for St. Mark's Day.

Eph. iv. 7——17.

Unto every one of us is given Grace, according to the Measure of the Gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led Captivity captive, and gave Gifts unto Men, &c.

THE Saint we remember this Day, is *St. Mark*, an Evangelist, and one of the Penmen of the Holy Gospel.

He was suppos'd to be born of Jewish Parents, and to be descended of the Tribe of *Levi*, or the Line of the Priesthood. He is thought to have been converted by *St. Peter*, to whom he was a Disciple and Attendant ever after. He accompany'd him in his Progress through all the Parts of *Italy*, and preach'd the Gospel at *Rome*, where he is said to have compos'd and wrote his Gospel. I shall not trouble you with the various Fancies and Conjectures that some have rais'd and entertain'd about him, as being neither certain nor material.

Good Authority informs us, that he was sent by *St. Peter* into *Egypt* to plant Christianity in those parts; which he did with good success, converting Multitudes both of Men and Women. He took up his chief Residence at *Alexandria*, where he presided as chief Governour of that Church and the Places thereabout, till after a barbarous manner he suffer'd Martyrdom.

The Collect for this Day minds us of *God's* instructing his holy Church with the heavenly Doctrine of his Evangelist *St. Mark*; thence praying him to give us Grace, that being not like Children carry'd away with every Blast of vain Doctrine, we may be establish'd in the Truth of his holy Gospel, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

The Epistle for the Day acquaints us,

First,

First, With God's giving several Gifts unto Men, for the instructing of his Church ; together with the Time, Manner, and Measure of his bestowing them.

Secondly, The several Ranks and Degrees of Persons, on whom these Gifts are bestow'd. And,

Thirdly, The great Ends for which they are given, together with the right Use we are to make of them. These things comprize the Substance of this Day's Epistle, and must be particularly consider'd.

And I begin, as the Epistle doth, with the several Gifts and Graces given to us for the instructing and edifying the Church of Christ, in these words: *Unto every one of us is given Grace, according to the measure of the Gift of Christ.* Our Blessed Saviour, like the Housholder in the Parable, being to go into a far Country, hath committed sundry Goods and Talents to his Stewards and Servants, willing them to be diligent and faithful in their Improvement, as those that must give an account at his Return, and be rewarded accordingly. And these are given to every one, tho not in the same kind or measure, but severally and in divers degrees, as he in his Wisdom shall think fit to dispense. *To one is given (saith the Apostle) the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge by the same Spirit, to another Faith, to another the Gift of Healing by the same Spirit, to another Prophecy, to another discerning of Spirits, to another diverse kinds of Tongues, to another the Interpretation of Tongues.* And this last is probably thought to be St. Mark's Talent, who was as an Amanuensis or Interpreter of St. Peter's Discourses ; which being deliver'd in diverse Languages, were by St. Mark expounded either by Word or Writing to those who understood not the Languages in which he spake.

For the Time of Christ's bestowing these Gifts, it was, as the next words declare, at the time of his Ascension up into Heaven, like the Housholder's going into a far Country. So the Psalmist foretold long before, saying in *Psal. 68. 18.* *When he ascended up on high, he led Captivity captive, and gave Gifts for Men.* At which time, like a King new crown'd, he went up triumphing over all his Enemies, leading Sin, Satan, Death and Hell captive, who had before held others in Captivity ; and at the same time scattering

tering many Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost in great variety among the Sons of Men.

Now he that thus ascended up to Heaven in Triumph, was the same that descended first into the lower parts of the Earth. By which is meant, either his Descent into the Virgin's Womb, there to take human Flesh, which is by the Psalmist stil'd, *his being fashioned beneath in the Earth, Psal. 139. 14.* or his Descent into the Grave, call'd sometimes *the Bowels of the Earth*; or else his Descent into Hell, signify'd by *the lower parts of the Earth, Psal. 63. 9.* And he that descended thus low, was the same also that ascended far above all Heavens, that he might fill all things: that is, the Son of God, who thus humbled himself to come from Heaven to Earth, merely to serve and save us, return'd back again to send down the Holy Ghost, to scatter his Gifts and Graces among us for the planting and propagating his Church. And this was done partly for his own, and partly for our sake: for his Exaltation was a Reward for his former Abasement, and his leaving us a while was for our greater Good, to give us his Holy Spirit to instruct, sanctify, and comfort us: for *if I go not away (saith he) the Holy Ghost will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* Accordingly, soon upon his Departure he endow'd his Disciples with Power from on high, and gave Gifts to Men; for the Holy Ghost came down upon them *in a mighty rushing Wind*, as a Token of Inspiration, and sat upon their heads in the form of *Fire*, to inflame them with Zeal and pious Ardors; and in the shape of *cloven Tongues*, to signify the Diversity of Languages with which they were endow'd, in order to the teaching of all Nations, and declaring to them in their several Tongues the wonderful things of God. *Acts 2.*

This for the Time of giving this Grace according to the measure of the Gift of Christ, which was at his ascending up into Heaven, from whence he shower'd down his Gifts and Graces in plentiful Effusions upon his Followers.

But, *Secondly*, who were the Persons to whom these Gifts were given? Why, they were chiefly the Apostles and Disciples of Christ, who were to plant and propagate the Gospel, and to do all things necessary for the instructing and well-governing the Church. So the next words tell us, *He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers.*
Where

Where we have the several Ranks, Orders, and Degrees of Ministers appointed by Christ in his Church, to whom he gave these Gifts for the better Discharge of their particular Offices.

(1.) *He gave some Apostles*; or, as it is in the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, Chap. 12. 28. *He set some in the Church, first Apostles*: first, not only in Order of Time, they being first chosen, but first in respect of Power and Jurisdiction; they being appointed to preside over the other Disciples, to set in order the things that are wanting, and to ordain Elders in every City, as we read, *Tit.* 1. 5. Indeed, an Apostle in the general Notion signifies no more than a common Messenger, or one sent upon any ordinary Errand; but here it signifies some particular Commissioners sent by Christ, with the same Power of ordering and ruling the Church that he himself had from the Father, of which we read, *John* 20. 21. For tho Christ, during his abode upon Earth, govern'd the Church himself, and the Apostles then were but his Substitutes and Followers; yet after his Departure and the Descent of the Holy Ghost, they were instated in the supreme Authority of the Church, and had Power to substitute others under them for the good Government of it. And these were succeeded by Bishops, who are still the Rulers and Overseers of the Flock of Christ, with the same Power of sending and constituting others in like manner to the World's end.

(2.) *He gave some Prophets*. These, beside the Power of instructing, were endow'd with the Gift of foretelling things to come, call'd in Scripture *the Gift of Prophecy*. Such were the Prophets of the Old Testament, who deliver'd Messages from God, and foretold future Events; and we read of some in the New Testament that did the same, as in *Acts* 11. 27, 28. *In those days came Prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch, and there stood up one of them, named Agabus, who signify'd by the Spirit, that there should be a great Dearth throughout all the World, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.* And of this Gift of Prophecy we read in *1 Cor.* 13. 2.

(3.) *He gave some Evangelists*. This Title is sometimes given to those, that wrote the Life and Actions of our Saviour, and publish'd the glad Tidings of the Gospel. Such were the four Evangelists, of whom *St. Mark* the Saint of this Day was one; whose Gospel in writing is still extant and read with us.

But the Notion of an Evangelist here is distinct from that of an Apostle, being plac'd after him, and signifying an Attendant or Substitute of an Apostle, one that was sent by him to preach the Gospel in places that had not yet receiv'd it, and where the Apostle could not well go. These are in Scripture call'd Evangelists: Thus *St. Mark* being sent by *St. Peter* into *Egypt* to publish the Gospel, and to plant Churches there, is stil'd an Evangelist. So *Philip* the Deacon being employ'd by the Twelve to preach in *Samaria*, is call'd *Philip the Evangelist*, *Acts* 8. 5, 12. And so was *Stephen*, for being sent to the Jews, *Acts* 6. 9. And *Timothy*, sent by *St. Paul* to *Ephesus*, is bid to *do the Work of an Evangelist*, *2 Tim.* 4. 5. And these were sometimes invested with Apostolical Power of Ordaining and Confirming, to supply the place of the Apostle, when hinder'd by Distance of Place, Sicknes, or any other Impediment, from doing it himself.

(4.) *He gave some Pastors and Teachers.* These were such as were appointed to teach and instruct those who had already receiv'd the Gospel, to feed the Flock of Christ with sound Doctrine, and to go before them by a pious Example, to baptize Converts, to catechize the Youth, and to expound the Scriptures in places where they were appointed: which are the standing Offices of the Ministers of Christ to this day.

These were the Persons to whom these several Gifts and Graces of the Spirit were given, with the several Ranks and Degrees of them.

But, *Thirdly*, what was the End of these Gifts, and of endowing these several Orders of Men with them? Why, that the following words will tell us: it was *for the perfecting of the Saints for the Work of the Ministry, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, &c.* Where the

1st End assign'd of these Gifts, was, *for the perfecting of the Saints for the Work of the Ministry*: that is, for the fitting and qualifying of Christ's Ministers for the able and faithful Discharge of the Duties of their Office; *that the Man of God may be perfect, thorowly furnished to all good Works*, as the same Apostle tells us, *2 Tim.* 3. Where the authoriz'd Teachers or Preachers of the Gospel are stiled sometimes by the name of *Saints*, or *Holy Men*, and sometimes *Holy Men of God*; the providing and endowing of

whom with Parts needful for the Work to which they are call'd, is the chief Design of all these spiritual Gifts; to enable them to *speake as the Oracles of God*, with Boldness, Pureness and Fidelity, that they may *exhort and rebuke with all Authority*, and diligently instruct and watch for the Souls committed to their charge, as those that must give account for them.

2dly, Another End of God's giving these Gifts, is for the Good of his Church and People, *for the edifying of the Body of Christ*. The Church is consider'd sometimes as a spiritual Temple, where all the Parts of it are built up in their holy Faith, and so make a holy Temple unto the Lord. At other times it is consider'd as a mystical Body, where all the Members are edify'd in Knowledg and join'd together in Love, and so make up one sacred and mystical Body, whereof Christ is the Head.

Now as God inspir'd Gifts into *Bazaliel* and *Aholiab*, and others, for the building the material Temple under the Law; so doth he still furnish his Ministers with Gifts for the edifying a spiritual Temple under the Gospel. And as the Members of the natural Body are join'd by Nerves and Ligaments to one another, so the Members of Christ's mystical Body are brought to be united together in the Bond of one Fellowship and Communion; which is the best means of strengthening and edifying the Body of Christ.

And this is to be done, *till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledg of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ*. Some understand these words of the time of the Jews and Gentiles coming all into one Christian Church, and their joining in the same Faith and Knowledg of the Son of God; the Church thereby attaining to its full Age, and as it were arriving to the Stature of a perfect Man, and to the Measure of the Fulness of Christ, that it can attain to in this Life. But others, and perhaps more probably, understand the words of that Perfection of Faith and Knowledg we shall arrive to in the World to come, when we shall be perfectly united to Christ our Head in a full Fruition of his Presence and glorious Godhead; which is but begun here in this imperfect state, and will be compleated hereafter, when we come to a state of Perfection in Life everlasting. And this is to the Body of the Church as its ripe and full Age, in comparison to its Childhood and Non-age here in this World; according to that of the
Apostle,

Apostle, 1 Cor. 13. 9, 10, &c. *Here we know but in part, and prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a Child, I spake as a Child, I understood as a Child, and thought as a Child; but when I became a Man, I put away childish things. For now we see thro a Glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

These are the Ends of these spiritual Gifts of Prophecy, Tongues, and Knowledg, which will be useful to us in the Ministry of the Church, and continue so to the end of the World; after which, they will be abolish'd and vanish away, as we are told, 1 Cor. 13. 8.

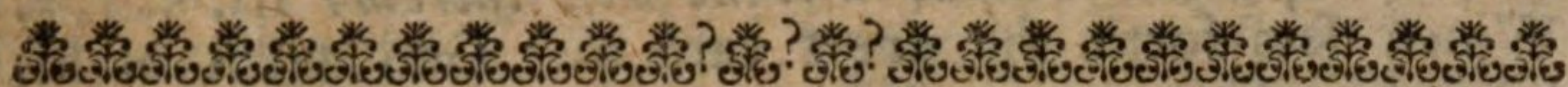
And this will lead me, in the last place, to consider the Use of these Gifts bestow'd for the benefit of the Church: And that is,

1. To preserve the Members of it from all Giddiness and Instability in Religion, and to secure them from false Doctrines, *that henceforth they be no more Children, tossed to and fro, and carry'd about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Sleight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* Such is the Weakness and Inconstancy of many Men, that like Children they are carry'd from one Doctrine to another, as a Wave of the Sea is driven with every Wind that blows, sometimes this way, and sometimes another; and that by the Sleight of Men, or Subtily of false Teachers, who by good Words and fair Speeches lead them into any new and strange Doctrines: and more are deceiv'd by the Sleight of the Tongue, than by Sleight of Hand. The Word in the Original is *κωβηλα*, which is the cogging of a Dye, and signifies the cheating the People by putting false Doctrines, as cunning Gamesters do by putting false Dice upon them; call'd therefore *their cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*: that is, their setting off their false Doctrines with those artificial Colours and Methods of Persuasion, as are most apt to seduce the unthinking Vulgar. Now God gave these spiritual Gifts to keep us sound in the Faith, that we may not be led away with the Error of the Wicked.

2. Another Use of these Gifts, which results from the former, is to preserve us stable and stedfast in the Truth: so the next words intimate, *that speaking the Truth in Love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head,*

even Christ: meaning, that by keeping firm and stedfast to the Truth as it is in Jesus, we shall thrive in all Christian Graces, and grow up into him in all things, as the Members grow in proportion to the Head. *From whom* (saith the Apostle in the last words) *the whole Body fitly join'd together, and compacted by that which every Joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every Part, maketh Increase of the Body, unto the edifying of it self in Love.* Where the Apostle alludes to the Frame and Contexture of the natural Body, and the Manner of its Growth in each part; which is by a fit Conjunction of all the Members, and the Communication of Spirits from the Head to each Member: for being thus knit together by Nerves and Sinews, and compacted by the Supply of every Joint, according to the Efficacy and Proportion of the Measure given to every Part, so is the Increase of Strength and Vigour to the Whole. Even so it is in the mystical Body of Christ's Church, where all the Members being fasten'd together in one Faith, united in the same Fellowship and Communion, and held together in one Bond of Peace and Love, receive spiritual Life, Strength, and Vigour from Christ the Head, according to the Measure and Proportion requisite for every Member; whereby they grow in Grace, and edify themselves in Love.

Thus we see the Drift and Design of the Epistle for this Day, which is to direct us to make a right Use of all spiritual Gifts; and that is, by applying them to *the Instruction of the Church*, according to the excellent Pattern of *the Evangelist St. Mark*: by whose Example we are taught to pray this day for *Grace, that we may not like Children be carry'd away with every Blast of vain Doctrine, but may be establish'd in the Truth of the Holy Gospel*; which, among the other Evangelists, was written and transmitted down to us by the Saint of this Day, and therefore to be receiv'd as the Oracles of God, and the Dictates of his Holy Spirit. All Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, and particularly the Holy Gospel, are given by Inspiration of God, and are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, and for Instruction in Righteousness; that both Minister and People may be kept *sound in the Faith, and thoroughly furnish'd to every good Word and Work*: which God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c.



DISCOURSE XIV.

The GOSPEL for St. Mark's Day.

St. John xv. 1—12.

I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman: every Branch in me that beareth not Fruit, he taketh away; and every Branch that beareth Fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more Fruit. Now are ye clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you, &c.

IN the Close of the Epistle for this Day, St. Paul told the *Ephesians*, and in them all Christians, that by adhering to the Truth, and living in it, we live in Christ, and grow up into him in all things, who is the Head of the Christian Church: which he after illustrated by the Similitude of the natural Body, wherein as all the Members are supply'd with Spirits, Strength, and Vigour from the Head; so in the mystical Body of Christ, all the Members receive spiritual Life, Growth, and Nourishment from Christ the Head of his Church.

This is farther illustrated in the Gospel for this Day, by the Resemblance of the Vine and Branches: 'tis our Saviour's own Comparison, which begins with these words of the Gospel; *I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman.*

By the *Vine* here we are to understand the Church of Christ, which is sometimes call'd and compar'd to a Field, where the Seed of God's Word is wont to be sown; sometimes to a Vine or Vineyard, for the Excellency of it above other Fields, for the continual need it hath of being watch'd and dress'd, and for the Value and Usefulness of its Fruit, which cheareth the Heart of God and Man. This Resemblance of the Church frequently occurs in Holy Scripture: *My Well-beloved* (saith God) *hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful Hill; he fenced it, and gather'd out the Stones of it,*

he planted it with the choicest Vine, and built a Tower in the midst of it, and also made a Wine-press therein: Isa. 5. 1, 2. Which sets forth the great care that God takes of his Church, asking, ver. 4. *What could have been done more to his Vineyard, which he hath not done in it?* The Prophet Jeremy calls it *a noble Vine planted with right Seed*, Chap. 2. 21.

By the *true Vine* here is meant the true Church, in opposition to the Synagogue of Satan, and the Conventicles of Hereticks and Schismatics, where the Tares and Weeds of Errors and Heresies are sown, and spring up to choke the Word, and corrupt sound Doctrine.

By Christ's saying, *I am the true Vine*, is meant his being the Head of the truly Christian and Catholick Church, wherever planted or scatter'd throughout the World; that the Church is his Body, animated by his Spirit, propagated by his Power, and preserv'd by his Providence: and so is the Author and Establisher of his Church in the World.

But because a Vine cannot flourish or prosper without the Care and Labour of a Husbandman, therefore our Saviour adds, that his Father is the Husbandman; *I am the true Vine* (saith he) *and my Father is the Husbandman*. He plants, and prunes, and dresses his Son's Vineyard; that is, he sows the good Seed of sound Doctrine in it by his Ministers, he fences it by a holy Discipline, waters it with the Dew of his heavenly Blessing, and then gives it all its Increase: so that he is *the Householder* mention'd by the four Evangelists, who *planted a Vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a Wine-press, and built a Tower in it, and let it out to other Husbandmen, and went into a far Country*: Mat. 21. 33. & Mark 12. 1. In short, God the Father, who hath by his Son planted a Church here below, hath the whole ordering of all things belonging to it; he manages and manures it by his Ministers, and takes care of every Branch and Believer in it, and hath a due Regard to every Member of this mystical Body.

Thus having shew'd the Author, Rise, and Original of the Christian Church, we are next to consider the several Parts and Members of it, represented here by the several Branches of this Vine: in which we are to consider both the Barrenness and the Fruitfulness of them, with the different Fate or Fortune assign'd to each. And,

First, For the barren Branches, we are told in the next Verse, *Every Branch in me that beareth not Fruit, he taketh away*: meaning, that all barren Branches are cut off from
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the Stock, and all unprofitable Members of Christ's Body the Church are lopt off and taken away by Excision or Excommunication. *St. Paul* speaks of *some Branches* of the *Jewish* Stock, that were broken off for their Unbelief, and likewise of some of the *Gentile* Branches that were ingrafted in their room, partaking of the Juice of the Root, and the Fatness of the Olive-Tree, and yet were rejected for their Infidelity and Unfruitfulness under the means of Grace; *Rom. II. 17, 20.* Which should caution us against being barren and unfruitful in the knowledg of our Lord Jesus Christ; for if God spar'd not the natural Branches, that is, his own People the Jews, take heed lest he also spare not thee. But,

Secondly, For the fruitful Branches, we are told, in the following words, *Every Branch that beareth Fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more Fruit: he pruneth it, and useth all means to make it the more fruitful; which may teach us to bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit, and to adorn our Profession with good Works: for if these things be in us, they will make that we shall not be barren or unfruitful, but abounding in Fruits of Righteousness, which will redound to the Praise and Glory of God, and to promote our own Salvation.*

And this he would have us to do, because we are in some measure prun'd and purify'd already by the Doctrine of Christ, and the Operation of his Holy Spirit: *Now ye are clean* (saith he) *thro the Word which I have spoken unto you*, and may continue so and increase more and more, *if ye hear my Words, and keep them. Abide therefore in me* (saith me) that is, in my Church, and be my Disciples; and then I will abide in you by my holy Spirit, and that will sanctify and cleanse you, that will comfort you in Distress, and direct you in all your Ways, and make you fruitful in every good Word and Work. My Presence is absolutely necessary to your Fructification: for as the Branch cannot bear Fruit of it self, except it abide in the Vine, and receive Sap and Nourishment from thence; no more can ye, except ye abide in me, and derive Grace and spiritual Strength from me. From whence he infers what he had before asserted, and was still proving, to wit, *I am the Vine, and ye are the Branches; I am the Stock or Tree into which ye are ingrafted, and ye are the Limbs or Branches that spring or sprout out from it: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much Fruit,*

He that continues a true Member of my Church, and is by a lively Faith united to me, and I to him, he, by the Grace communicated by me to him, will be fruitful in all good Works; but if ye be sever'd or cut off from me, and the Influences of my Grace and Holy Spirit be stop'd from coming to you, there can no good Fruit come from you; *for without me (saith he) ye can do nothing.* So even the best of Men have found and acknowledg'd: *I can do nothing of my self (saith St. Paul) but I can do all things thro Christ that strengthens me.* We are not sufficient of our selves to think a good Thought, and much less to do any good Action; *All our Sufficiency is of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good-pleasure.* His Power is seen in our Weakness, and his Grace, if deriv'd upon us, will be at all Times and in all Cases sufficient for us; provided still that we keep firm and steddy to his Church, and partake of his holy Ordinances, which are the Channels to convey spiritual Life and Strength to us.

But if a Man abide not in me, or in my Church (as he goes on) *he is cast forth as a Branch, and is wither'd, and Men gather them, and cast them into the Fire, and they are burn'd.* A Branch, you know, cut off from the Vine, presently withers and dies away, and is fit for nothing but the Fire; even so he that falls off from Christ, or is by the just Judgment of the Father broken off from him, is soon depriv'd of God's Grace; and then like a Tree destitute of all Sapor Juice quickly withers, and is fit only to be cast away and burn'd, becoming like the barren Fig-Tree cursed by our Saviour, saying, *Let never Fruit grow on thee any more, but cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground? and cast it into the Fire.* Which shews us the extreme Danger of Excision, and of the dreadful Sentence of Excommunication, whereby Men are cut off from the Body of Christ's Church, and without Repentance and returning to it, become only Fuel for the Flames of Divine Vengeance.

Let us therefore persevere and abide in this Vine, which God's own right Hand hath planted; and then we shall be supply'd with Grace and Strength to bring forth much Fruit, if we take care to continue united to Christ in his Church, that he may not be provok'd to withdraw his Spirit and Blessing from us.

These things our Saviour here often repeats and inculcates again and again, that we may give the more diligent heed

heed to them, and that they may leave the more deep and lasting Impression upon us ; that we may know the great Advantages of adhering to him, and the great Danger of deserting and withdrawing from him. In a word, he presses these things with the greater Earnestness, to make us sensible of our Dependence upon him for Life and Grace, and all things, and where our Recourse must be for them, as also upon what Conditions we may be embolden'd to ask them, with any comfortable Hopes or Assurance of receiving them : to which end, he tells us, for our Encouragement, in the

Next words, *that if ye abide in me, and my Words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you:* meaning, that as long as we continue in Christ's Church, and persist in our Obedience to him and his Doctrine, so long all the Prayers we put up to him shall be heard and answer'd.

This is a vast and invaluable Privilege, to have the Ear of the Almighty always open to our Prayers, and to have our Requests ever ready to find Audience and Acceptance in the Court of Heaven : which Privilege was purchas'd for us, and is still granted to us by our powerful Advocate and Mediator at God's Right Hand ; and while we abide in his Church, and agree in our Petitions, we may be assur'd will be continu'd to us. He will hear the private and secret Prayers of the Family and the Closet, for the supply of our particular Wants, and much more the publick Petitions offer'd up by the joint Consent and Agreement of the Church, for the good of the Whole : for he delights in the Assemblies of his Saints, and will be ever propitious to those that draw nigh unto him ; especially if our Prayers be accompany'd with hearty Desires and Endeavours to please him by Fruitfulness in good Works, which redound to his Praise and Glory.

For *herein* (saith our Saviour) *is my Father glorify'd, that ye bear much Fruit ; and so shall ye be my Disciples.* The Glory of God is the chief End of our Being, and our Fruitfulness in good Works is our best way of promoting it : not that we can make the least addition to his essential Glory, which ever was, and will be the same for ever, and admits of no Increase or Decrease by any thing we can say or do. But God esteems himself glorify'd in the good Deeds of his People, which are the Effects of his Grace working in them, and represent the Holiness of our Heavenly

venly Father in the Holiness of his Children. And therefore our Saviour exhorts, that *our good Works should shine before Men, that they may glorify our Father which is in Heaven*; these things administering to the setting forth of his Glory. *Mat. 5. 16.*

A bad Life dishonours God, and disgraces our Profession, and we blemish both by an unworthy and unsuitable Conversation: yea, we give occasion to the Enemy to blaspheme by our wicked Lives, and deal with God as *Simeon and Levi* did with *Jacob*, *make his Name to stink among the Inhabitants of the Land*. Whereas by Works of Piety and Virtue we bring credit to his Name, and the abounding in Fruits of Righteousness will redound to his Praise and Glory.

And as bearing much Fruit is the best way of glorifying God, so will it give the best proof of our Discipleship: *So shall ye be my Disciples*, saith Christ; that is, you shall hereby shew your selves true Followers of me and my Doctrine, by doing things worthy of and agreeable to both: by this means it will appear, that you seek my Honour, as I seek the Glory of my Father; and that will bring you at last to a Crown of endless Bliss and Glory.

This our Saviour here farther urges from the Love that he bears to his Disciples and Followers, which is like that which the Father beareth unto him: *As the Father hath loved me* (saith he) *so have I loved you; continue ye in my Love*. The Love that God the Father bore to his Son, is the most intense, and carries in it the highest degrees of Affection; and if the Love of Christ be the same towards us, it must inflame his Breast with the purest and most ardent Affection. And that so it does, is evident by the many and great Demonstrations he hath given us of it; for he hath loved us to the death, having laid down his Life, and shed his most precious Blood for us: *And greater Love than this hath no Man, to lay down his Life for his Friend*. And yet Christ hath in a manner shew'd to us greater Love than this, in laying down his Life for his Enemies: *For when we were Enemies* (saith the Apostle) *we were reconcil'd unto God by the Death of his Son*; *Rom. 5. 10.*

Now the Force of our Saviour's Argument here lies in this, That if God the Father thus loved his Son, for doing and submitting to his Will in all things; the same Love of Christ to us, should in like manner engage us to do nothing but what is grateful and well-pleasing to him: the known
Pro.

Properties of true Love being a Study to please, and a Desire to enjoy. The way to please him, is by bearing much Fruit, and that too will be the way to enjoy him for ever : for *if we have our Fruit unto Holiness, the End will be everlasting Life* ; Rom. 6. 22. And by both these we shall continue his Love to us, and ours to him, which are best preserv'd by Holiness and true Obedience. So our Saviour declares in the next words, *If ye keep my Commandments, ye shall abide in my Love, even as I have kept my Father's Commandments, and abide in his Love* : meaning, that as he secur'd the Continuance of his Father's Love, by fulfilling his Will, and keeping his Laws ; so may we secure the Continuance of our Saviour's Love and Favour to us, by a constant and ready Obedience to his Commands.

Indeed, Christ both here and elsewhere hath made this the truest Mark and Criterion of our Love to him ; *If ye love me* (saith he) *keep my Commandments*, John 14. 15. The Disciples there would fain shew their Love to Christ, by their Unwillingness to lose his Company : he had a little before told them of his leaving of them, and going to his Father ; they presently grew sad upon the News, which shew'd that they lov'd him, and would fain keep him still with them. But Christ did not take that for a sufficient Sign or Token of true Affection ; for this might be an Argument only that they lov'd themselves, because they receiv'd much Good by his Stay, which they were not willing to lose by his Departure. And therefore our Saviour gave them another more certain and infallible Mark or Testimony of their Love to him, and that was the observing his Precepts ; *If ye love me indeed, keep my Commandments*. This is the way he would have us to express our Affection to him : for *he that keepeth my Commandments* (saith he) *he it is that loveth me* ; and he that keepeth them not, beareth no true Affection to me. *Ye are my Friends if ye do whatsoever I command you* ; but *ye are Enemies to me by evil Works*, and your Disobedience bids defiance to me. In short, to continue in Christ's Love, is to continue in Christ's Laws ; and then we shall find, that *in keeping his Commandments there will be great Reward*.

These things (saith our Saviour) *have I spoken unto you, that my Joy may remain in you, and that your Joy might be full*. Wherein he acquaints them with the Reason and End of this his large Discourse with them ; which was, that the Comfort they had found in his Presence might remain with them

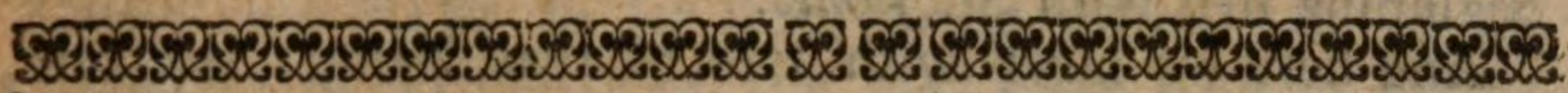
them in his Absence; and that the Holy Ghost, which would come to them when he was gone, might fulfil their Joy, and compleat their Consolation.

This is the Sum and Substance of the Gospel for this Day; wherein is set forth,

1. The great Benefit of being Members of Christ's Church and continuing in it, represented by the Branches of a Vine, and abiding in it; which will enable us to bring forth good Fruit, and to abound in the Graces of the Spirit, which will in due time ripen into Glory. And,

2. The great Danger of being shut out of Christ's Church, or cut off from this Vine; which will render us barren and unfruitful, and like wither'd Branches good for nothing, but to be cut down and cast into the fire. And both of them call upon us to beware of all voluntary Separation, whereby we cut off our selves from Christ's Church; and likewise to dread the Sentence of Excommunication, whereby we are cut off from it by others: And by both put our selves out of the ordinary Way and Method of Salvation, and without Repentance and Returning fall into the broad Way that leadeth to Destruction; from which, good Lord deliver us.





DISCOURSE XV.

The EPISTLE for St. Philip and St. James's Day.

St. James i. 1——12.

James a Servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve Tribes which are scattered abroad, Greeting. My Brethren, count it all Joy when ye fall into divers Temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your Faith worketh Patience: But let Patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and intire, wanting nothing, &c.

OUR Church celebrates this day the Memory of two eminent Saints, St. Philip and St. James, both of them Apostles of Christ. Some antient Writers tell us, that in the primitive Church the Apostles had not several Days appointed for their solemn Remembrance; but were all commemorated together on one Day: in the *Latin Church*, on this first of *May*; in the *Greek*, on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul. But in After-times particular Days were assign'd for the more solemn commemorating of each, as it is with us to this day.

However that be, St. Philip and St. James are here coupled to be remember'd together in one Day. The Collect for the Day likewise joins them together, beseeching Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting Life, to grant us perfectly to know his Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that following the steps of his holy Apostles St. Philip and St. James, we may steadfastly walk in the Way that leadeth to eternal Life, through the same Jesus Christ his Son our Lord.

The Epistle for the Day gives us some Account of the Life and Doctrine of St. James, and the Gospel of St. Philip;

110 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*
lip; both which are therefore to be particularly spoken to:
beginning first with *St. James*.

And here we meet with two of that Name: the one,
James the Son of Zebedee, call'd *James the Great*, whose
Memory is celebrated on the 25th of *July*: the other,
James the Son of Joseph, before he marry'd the Virgin
Mary, and so the Brother of our Lord. He is call'd *James*
the Less, either for the difference of Stature, as some
think, being less in Body than *James the Great*; or for the
difference of Age, as others conceive, being less in Years
than he. He was for his Piety and Virtue surnamed *Justus*,
or *James the Just*. He was the first Bishop of *Jerusalem*,
either constituted so by our Blessed Saviour a little before
his Ascension; or elected by the Apostles soon after, for
his Relation to him. He was honour'd with a particular
Appearance of our Lord to him, after his Resurrection;
1 Cor. 15. 7. *He was seen of James*. And he after presided
in the great Council of the Apostles at *Jerusalem*, and de-
termin'd that great Controversy about the Obligation of
Moses's Law; of which we read, *Acts 15*.

This is the *St. James* that we commemorate this Day:
he wrote the General Epistle of *St. James*, part whereof is
appointed to be read for this Day's Epistle, of which I
come now to treat.

It begins with a kind Salutation of them to whom it is
written, in these words; *James a Servant of God, and of*
the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve Tribes which are scatter'd
abroad, Greeting. Where tho he was the Brother of our
Lord, and Bishop of *Jerusalem*, the Mother of all other
Churches, yet he styles himself a Servant of the Lord Je-
sus: neither the Greatness of his Relation, nor the Dignity
of his Station could exalt him in his Thoughts above the
Condition and Opinion of a Servant; which shews the
Lowliness and Humility of his Mind, who like his Saviour
took upon him the Form of a Servant, tho too many in
that Condition aspire to the Honour of Masters, and exalt
themselves to the Dignity and Title of such.

The Persons to whom he sent this Epistle, were *the*
twelve Tribes scatter'd abroad; that is, the Jewish Chris-
tians dispers'd every where among the Gentiles: whom he
greeted by the name of Brethren, a farther Instance of his
Humility; and then fortifies them against all those Temp-
tations, that might endanger their Faith, and discourage
them from professing and persevering in it. *My Brethren,*
faith

Epistle for St. Philip and St. James's Day. 111

saith he, *count it all Joy when ye fall into divers Temptations*; that is, be so far from being discourag'd by any Troubles or Tribulations you may meet with in Christ's Cause, that you should look upon it as a matter of great Joy, that you have thereby an opportunity of shewing your Constancy and Fidelity to him: reckon it rather among the Favours than the Frowns of Heaven, that your Faith is put to the trial in the Furnace of Affliction, from whence by Patience and Perseverance it will come forth more refin'd and purify'd. This is the End of God's sending or permitting Afflictions to befall us, not for our Prejudice, but for the Exercise of our Patience: and this will be the Effect of our not fainting under them; for *the Trial of our Faith worketh Patience*; and that, Perseverance; and both, the Purity of Holiness, and Perfection of Happiness: which gainful Effects of Affliction may give us that Superiority of Mind, and Victory over our selves, as may enable us rather to rejoice than faint under Tribulations. In order whereunto, the Apostle advises them to *let Patience have her perfect work*, without the least murmuring or repining; and to hold out to the end, *that they may be perfect and intire, wanting nothing*: meaning, that instead of sinking, this would raise their Hearts to rejoicing in God, to blessing and praising of him for Adversity as well as Prosperity; which is the highest pitch and perfection of this Virtue, and will make them perfect and intire Christians, wanting nothing to compleat their Character, and secure their Felicity.

But because we cannot arrive to this degree of Perfection by our own Power, nor attain this Fortitude and Constancy of Mind our selves, St. James here directs us where we may go for it with an Assurance of obtaining it: *If any of you lack Wisdom*, to judg rightly of Afflictions, and spiritual Strength and Courage to bear them, *let him ask it of God*, who hath all Power and Might, and in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledg; and to encourage us to have recourse to him, adds, *that he giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not*. He freely giveth this spiritual Wisdom, and bestows his Grace without any Merit or Purchase of ours: and he giveth to *all Men*; his Bounty is not confin'd to a few, or shut up within a narrow compass, but his Mercy is over all his Works, and extends it self to all Men that duly ask and apply to him for it. He excludes none that are willing to come to him,

him, but opens his Hand to all that open their Mouths for it. And this he doth not in scanty measures, or with a sparing, but liberal and bountiful Hand: so the Psalmist tells us, *He openeth his Hand, and filleth all things living with Plenteousness.* He is not niggardly of his Blessings, nor doth he pinch or spare, but *giveth to all Men liberally*; and that too without reproaching or upbraiding any with it, *He upbraideth not.* 'Tis the Pride and Folly of many Men to be often twitting and casting others in the teeth with what they have given or done for them; against which evil Practice, *Seneca* a wise Heathen hath given a good Caution, *Qui dedit beneficium* (saith he) *taceat, narret qui accepit.* He that hath done another a good turn, let him be silent, and leave it to the Receiver to divulge and publish his Charity; for he that upbraids or boasts of it hath paid himself, and lost both the Honour and Reward of his Bounty.

But tho' this be too frequent with Men, yet 'tis quite otherwise with God; for he *giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not.* Which is abundant Encouragement to all Persons to go to him for spiritual Strength and Wisdom, to bear up cheerfully under all Trials and Afflictions that may befall them; especially having a sure Promise of succeeding in what they ask, from the next words, *And it shall be given unto them.* We need not doubt of receiving what he thus puts us upon asking; for he who is Truth it self cannot fail of his Word, or falsify his Promise.

But yet 'tis not all asking neither, that will prevail with him; for *St. James*, the Saint of this Day, tells us, that *many ask and receive not, because they ask amiss*: and therefore he wills us, in the next words, to *ask in Faith, nothing wavering*; that is, with a full Persuasion of being heard, without giving way to any Diffidence or Distrust. For God having past his Word of giving to him that asks, we may safely depend upon his Veracity, and cannot entertain any Doubts about it, without casting unworthy Reflections on his Truth and Faithfulness; for all Doubting and Distrust calls in question either his Power or his Willingness to perform his Promise: which is to charge the Almighty either with Impotence or Imposture, either of which will shut his ears against all our Petitions. And therefore we must banish all such desponding and despairing Thoughts of God in our Addresses to him, and ask him always in full Assurance of Faith.

But

But beside that, to *ask in Faith, nothing wavering*, implies asking with a firm Adherence to him in all Troubles, coming to him with a resolv'd Mind, whatever happens, to stick to him; not shrinking from him in any Hardship, nor flying to any indirect means to be deliver'd from them; but in all our Trials to cast our selves upon the Power and Providence of God, without making shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience: doing nothing under the greatest Sufferings, but what is right and acceptable to him, and at all times *holding fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*. For he that wavereth (saith our Apostle) is like a Wave of the Sea, driven with the Wind and tossed: meaning, that Doubting and Wavering keep Men in a perpetual Tempest and Agitation of Mind, driven about with every Wind of Doctrine, and toss'd to and fro with every Wave of Persecution. Such a one blasts the Design, and defeats the Issue and Success of all his Prayers; For let not that Man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. Such do but deceive themselves with vain Hopes, who imagine that such Prayers will avail any thing before God. A double-minded Man is unstable in all his ways, and unsuccessful in all his Prayers. Where by a double-minded Man we understand a Man that hath no Steadiness of Mind, nor any certain Rule of Action, but is of one mind to-day, and of another to-morrow, and varies with the Wind and Tide of human Affairs: like Janus he hath a double Face, and looks two different ways; he commonly swims with the Stream, and with the Boatmen looks one way, and rows another. He is a Man full of Doubts, like Agrippa half a Christian and half a Heathen; the least Scruple perplexes him, but the greatest Reason cannot satisfy him: and tho he sees cause to favour all Religions, yet he cannot find Truth enough in them to stick to any. He often plays a double Game, and like an expert Gamester can sometimes cogg, and sometime use false Dice. This is express'd in Scripture by the Sleight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, Eph. 4. 14. He hath a double Heart and a double Tongue; his Mind agrees not with his Words, nor his Words with his Actions: for he thinks one thing, and says another; and likewise says one thing, and does another. They speak Vanity every one with their Neighbour (saith the Psalmist) they flatter with their Lips, and dissemble with their double Heart; Psal. 12. 2. In short, a double-minded Man is a sort of Weathercock, that

turns with the Wind, and is carry'd about with every Blast of vain Doctrine.

Such double-minded Men are here said to be *unstable in all their Ways*, and so wavering and uncertain in all their Petitions. They are unstable in Matters of Religion, like the Worshipers of *Baal* halting between two Opinions; inclining sometimes to the Church, at other times to the Conventicle, as Interest, Pride, or Prejudice lead them. By which Giddiness and Instability many are led from one Sect to another, till they lose all Religion, and settle at last in Atheism and Infidelity. And who can think that the Prayers of such Men should find any Audience or Acceptance with God?

Again, such double-minded Men are unstable in Matters of Government, being often given to Change, and playing fast and loose with the State as well as the Church: They will adhere to the Government, while they can serve their own Ends by it; but if the Tide turns, they then plot and combine to undermine it. They can be pleas'd with Monarchy, whilst the Monarch pleases them; but if they be disgusted, then for a Commonwealth, or any body rather than their Natural and Rightful Prince. This is to make themselves not the Subjects and Servants, but the Masters and Controllers of Princes; robbing Kings of their Sovereignty, and placing the Supremacy in the People: which will make both God and Man deaf to all their Petitions.

Once more, A double-minded Man is unstable in Matters of Commerce and Conversation with Mankind, being neither true to his Word, nor constant to his Promises, nor faithful in Trusts, nor just in his Dealings and Bargains with others; but moving in all by the Wheels of Interest and Double-dealing, suiting his Discourse to the Place and Company wherein he is, and turning his Tale by the Tide of Times and Affairs; becoming *all things to all Men*, in another sense than St. Paul meant it, not *to gain some*, but *to get something*. And how can it be thought, that God, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without variableness or shadow of turning, should regard the Petitions of such variable and unstable Persons?

And now the Apostle having exhorted all Christians rather to rejoice than repine at any Trials or Afflictions that befall them, and directed them how to attain to such a Firmness and Fortitude; which is by asking it of God, who

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who is ever ready and willing to give it ; together with the Way and Manner of asking it aright, which is in Faith without wavering : He addresseth himself to all sorts of Persons, high and low, rich and poor, to consider and act accordingly ; saying in the next words, *Let the Brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the Rich in that he is made low* : meaning, that as the Poor may comfort himself in being rais'd to a higher Condition, as the Reward of his Patience ; so let the Rich be thankful, that he is brought low for the Correction of his Pride, that both may reap the Comfort and Benefit of their Afflictions. Adding for a Reason, the Shortness of human Life, and the Vanity of all earthly Prosperity ; *because as the Flower of the Grass they shall pass away. For the Sun (saith he) is no sooner risen with a burning Heat, but it withereth the Grass, and the Flower thereof falleth, and the Grace of the Fashion of it perisheth ; so also shall the rich Man fade away in his ways.* Where he compares all worldly Felicity to the Herbs and Flowers of the Field, which are either scorch'd by the Heat of Summer, or destroy'd by the Cold of Winter ; both ways they vanish and die away. Even so Man in his best Estate is altogether Vanity, for he fadeth away suddenly *like the Grass, which in the Morning is green and groweth up, but in the Evening is cut down, dryed up and withered ;* Psal. 90. To the same purpose speaks St. Peter, *All Flesh is Grass, and all the Glory of Man as the Flower of Grass ; the Grass withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away :* 1 Pet. 1. 24. So transitory and short-liv'd is all worldly Wealth and Prosperity, which oftentimes tend to the present Hurt of the Possessors here, and end in their future Misery and Ruin hereafter.

Whereas *blessed is the Man that endureth Temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him :* that is, Adversity well improv'd will promote our present Good, and advance our future Happiness ; for the Rod frequently corrects our Wandrings, and reduces us to a sound Mind : and where that is, these short Trials will soon end, and work out for us an eternal Weight of Glory.

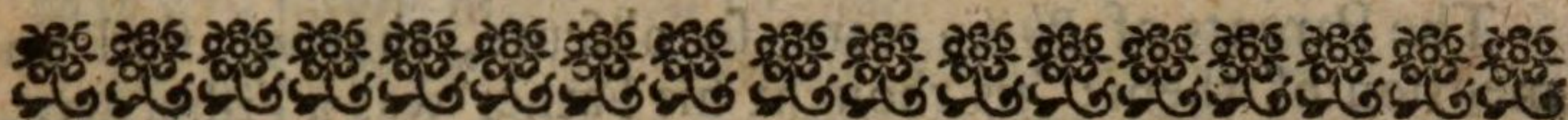
This is the Sum of this Day's Epistle, wherein St. James, the Saint of this Day, teaches us the hard Lesson of Patience and Joy in Tribulations ; a Lesson which none but good Men can learn, and nothing but the Grace of God can

instil into us : which we are therefore to ask in Faith with the greatest Fervency.

This Lesson we are taught by the Example of the Saint of this Day, who underwent many sharp and difficult Trials for the Cause of Christ ; which made his Faith the more bright, laudable, and glorious. His last and great Trial, which put an end to his Life, was from the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* ; who by flattering Speeches drew him up to the top of the Temple, there publickly to declare before a great Confluence of People his Sentiments concerning Christ, thinking by that means to make him renounce him : but he, on the contrary, being advantageously plac'd upon a Pinnacle or Wing of the Temple, where he might be seen and heard of all, boldly asserted Christ to be the true Messias, from whom alone Salvation was to be expected, and that he whom they crucify'd was now at the Right Hand of God, to make Intercession for all that believe in him : which he aver'd with that Confidence and Force of Argument, that the People hearing him below, presently glorify'd the Blessed Jesus, and cry'd, *Hosanna to the Son of David* ! At which his Enemies being enrag'd, threw him down from the high place where he stood ; where tho much bruise'd, yet he was not kill'd by the Fall, but he recover'd Strength enough to get upon his knees, and to pray God to forgive them : and while he was thus praying for them, they loaded him with a Shower of Stones, till one more cruel than the rest with a Fuller's Club beat out his Brains.

Thus died this holy Man a bloody Death by the hands of barbarous Enemies : from whose great Example, let us learn with him to be faithful unto Death, and then with him too we shall receive a Crown of Life ; which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XVI.

The G O S P E L for St. Philip and St. James's Day.

St. John xiv. 1—15.

And Jesus said to his Disciples, Let not your Hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's House are many Mansions: I go to prepare a Place for you, and will come again and receive you unto my self: and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how should we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Philip saith unto him, Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth, &c.

THE Epistle, of which I treated in my last, gave us some Account of the Life and Doctrine of St. James, one of the Saints of this Day; and particularly of his Directions, how to attain to the excellent Grace of Patience and Perseverance under all the Trials and Sufferings of this present Life, so as to arrive at last to the Happiness of the next.

The Gospel, of which I am now to treat, gives us some account of St. Philip, the other Saint coupled with St. James, and commemorated together this Day. He was born at *Bethsaida*, a Town of *Galilee* near the Sea of *Tiberias*, inhabited mostly by Fishermen, and fam'd for little else but Rudeness and Incivility. Hence our Saviour by way of reproach was call'd a *Galilean*: Can any Good come out of *Nazareth*? (a City of *Galilee*) was a proverbial Saying; and out of *Galilee* (say the *Pharisees*) there ariseth no Prophet. And yet out of this despicable place our Saviour chose most of his Disciples, to be his Instruments in converting the World, to shew that by the weak and foolish things

things of the World he could confound the Wisdom of the Wise.

The Parents of *Philip* were so obscure, that we find no mention of them: 'tis thought his Father was a Fisherman, the general Trade of *Bethsaida*, and that he too was brought up to the same.

However that be, he had the honour of being first call'd to the Discipleship: for tho Christ first met with *Andrew* and *Peter*, yet they soon parted from him, and return'd to their Trade, and were not call'd till a Year after; but the next day our Saviour meeting *Philip*, bid him to follow him, the usual Form of calling Disciples: and he immediately left all and follow'd him. Soon after he brought in *Nathaniel* and others to be his Disciples. Upon the Dispersion of the Apostles, *Philip* was sent to plant and preach the Gospel in upper *Asia*, and coming at last to *Hierapolis* in *Phrygia*, he there laid down his Life, and suffer'd Martyrdom in the Cause of Christ, and the Propagation of his Gospel.

But to come to the Gospel for the Day: It begins with Christ's comforting his Disciples upon his going away from them; for when he talk'd to them of his leaving the World, and ascending up to Heaven, and going to his Father, they were extremely dejected at the thoughts of his Departure: which he perceiving, sought to raise their sinking Spirits, saying to them, *Let not your Hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me*: that is, Be not dismay'd at my withdrawing a while from you; put your trust in God, and believe in me, and then you shall be no Losers, but great Gainers by my short Absence from you. *For in my Father's House are many Mansions*: I am going to Heaven, where there is abundantly room enough for me, and all that believe on me. I do not go about to flatter or deceive you, for *if it were not so, I would have told you*; you may depend upon it, I tell you the truth in this matter. *I go to prepare a place for you*: My going a little before, is to be your Harbinger to make provision for you. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will, as an Harbinger, come back again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also*: that is, I will shortly meet you again, and introduce you into my Father's Kingdom. *And whither I go you know, and the way ye know*: You cannot but know, that I am going to the Father, having often told you; nor can you be ignorant of the way that

that leads to him, having plainly directed you in the Path that will surely bring you thither.

To this *Thomas* the distrustful Disciple objected, and *saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?* Not that he was wholly ignorant of the one or the other, having often heard of both; but he knew them not so clearly and certainly as he desir'd, and his doubting Tempter call'd for fuller Satisfaction: which our Saviour therefore gave him. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: i.e. I am the Way, by the Example I have set before you: I am the Truth, by the Doctrine which I have preach'd unto you: and I am the Life, by laying down my own Life to purchase eternal Life for you.* Or, as others paraphrase it, *I am the Way* in mine own Person, *the Truth* in my Doctrine, and *the Life* in the quickning Graces of my Spirit. And *no Man cometh to the Father, saith he, but by me:* which is as if he had said, I am the true living Way, appointed by my Father to direct all Men in the way to him; and there is no other way of coming to the Knowledg and Enjoyment of him, but by me, and by going the same way that I lead or go before you. So that *if you had known me (saith he) ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him:* that is, if you had been thoroughly acquainted with me, and my Doctrine, who am come, and speak and do all things in his Name, you would have come to a better understanding of the Father also; for he being invisible, is no otherwise to be known, than as he is reveal'd in and by me. So that altho you have never seen the Father, yet having seen and known me, who am his living Image, you have both seen and known him.

To this Discourse of our Saviour's, *Philip* the Saint of this Day makes a somewhat strange Reply; for not considering the Sense of the last words, *he saith unto him, Lord shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.* For Christ having told him, that he was the Image of the Father, and he that had seen him, had seen the Father; who being a Spirit, was not visible to our bodily Eyes, and could only be seen in and by him: this was an unnecessary and impertinent Demand, and proceeded either from Ignorance or Inadvertence; which our Saviour therefore mildly rebuk'd in him, saying, *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?* After so long an Attendance upon me, thou mightest easily have known and seen that I am

the Image of my Father, and the express Character and Representation of his Person ; his infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness brightly shining and appearing in me : so that by seeing and knowing of me, thou mightst have seen and known the Father also ; and how comest thou now to be ignorant of this, and after so long time that thou hast seen me, to say, *Shew us the Father ?*

From this gentle Reproof of his Ignorance in these matters, after three Years Education under Christ's Discipline and Institution, we may learn two or three useful Lessons.

(1.) That Christ expects an Improvement in his Followers, according to the Time and Measure of the Talents and Advantages afforded to them ; for he here blames *Philip* for the small Improvement he had made in the Knowledge of him and his Father, after so long Attendance upon his Instructions. Hast thou known me so long time (saith he) and seen the Image of the Father in me, and yet *sayest thou now, Shew us the Father ?* St. Paul speaks of some, that for the time they had enjoy'd the Means of Grace, *might have been Teachers of others, and yet had need to be taught themselves, what are the first Principles of the Oracles of God.* And of others, that *they were ever learning, but never came to the knowledg of the Truth.* 2 Tim. 3. 7.

Such as these, like Truants, make none, or a bad Improvement in Christ's School, and justly deserve Shame and Punishment ; as may be seen in the Parable of the Talents : which may teach us to make a better Use of the Time and Talents intrusted with us.

(2.) We may observe here, that our Saviour conceal'd not the Faults and Failings of his own Disciples, but as occasion serv'd gave them many mild Rebukes for them : so he did with *Philip* here, for his small Proficiency in the Knowledge of him, and not better improving the Time and Opportunities he had of learning of him. And elsewhere in trying his Faith he found it weak and deficient ; for when he was about to feed five thousand by Miracle in the Wilderness, where all Provisions fail'd, he ask'd *Philip, Whence he should buy Bread, that they might eat ?* This Question he put to him merely to *prove him, for he himself knew what he would do.* But *Philip* in a distrustful manner answer'd, *that two hundred Penny-worth of Bread was not sufficient for every one to take a little :* meaning, that he could not conceive how so much Provision might be had, as to suffice so great a Multitude ; not knowing or considering,

sidering, that 'twas as easy to a Divine Power to feed five thousand as one single Person ; nothing being difficult or impossible to him, that can do all things, as he after found.

Again, we find our Saviour blaming the Slowness of another Disciple's Understanding, and the Backwardness of his Faith ; saying to *Thomas*, who requir'd the Evidence of his Senses, and the most palpable Demonstrations, before he would believe, *Thomas, because thou hast seen thou believest, but blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believ'd ;* John 20.

At other times we find him checking the Infidelity and Slackness of Belief of his own Apostles, saying, *O Fools and slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have written !* Luke 24. 25.

Again, He rebuk'd the Drowsiness of his Disciples, who in the Night before his Passion fell asleep more than once, whilst he was praying to his Father, and deprecating the bitter Cup : for which great Coldness of Affection and seeming Unconcernedness for his Sufferings, he gave them this mild Reproof, *What, could you not watch with me one Hour ?* Mat. 26. 40, 41. Adding withal that good Lesson, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into Temptation.*

Furthermore, We may observe that the Holy Scriptures, in relating the Lives and Actions of the Saints, take notice of their Failings and Miscarriages, as well as their Vertues. Thus *Philip's* Non-proficiency here, and elsewhere *David's* Murder and Adultery, *Peter's* Denial of his Master, *Paul's* being a Persecutor and Unbeliever, stand all upon Record in Sacred Writ ; partly to teach us not to presume upon our own Strength without God's Grace, and partly not to despair of Mercy upon our true Repentance.

But to go on with our Saviour's Discourse with *Philip* : To strengthen his Faith, and increase his Knowledg in him, our Saviour puts the Question again to him ; *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of my self ; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the Works : that is, Dost thou not yet see the Image of the Father shining in me ? and behold the Divine Power, Wisdom, and Goodness in lively Characters stamp'd upon and represented in me ? Which is so true, that whatsoever I say or do, is by Appointment and Commission from the Father : I speak not of my self, but 'tis God that speaks to you in my Doctrine,*
and

and 'tis he that confirms it to you by my Miracles ; 'tis his Power that acts in and by me, and the Father that is ever present with and dwelleth in me, he it is that doth the Works that ye see me do. So that you may safely take my word, and *believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me* : We are inseparably united together in Nature and Will ; all the Fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in me, and all that I teach or do, proceed jointly from the Father and me.

But if you will not give so much credit to my Word and Doctrine, as to *believe that I and my Father are one, yet believe me for the very Works sake*. The very Miracles that you have seen with your own Eyes may easily demonstrate a Divine Power ; and if there were nothing else, the Works done before you are sufficient to convince you that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ; and that there is an Almighty Power residing in both.

To the same purpose spake our Saviour to them that accus'd him of Blasphemy, for saying he was the Son of God, *John 10. 37, 38. If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not ; but if I do, tho ye believe not me, believe the Works ; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him* : that is, if I do not perform those Acts, that plainly manifest a Divine Power, and testify that I come from God, you have then some colour for your Unbelief ; but if I perform such Acts as clearly prove these things, then your Infidelity must be unreasonable and inexcusable : and if you have not Faith enough to believe what I say, yet let your Faith rest on those Works that you see me do, which evidently shew that the Father acts in me, and I in him ; and consequently that I and my Father are one. Where he appeals to his Works for the Truth of his Doctrine, as he doth here, and in sundry other places ; which may therefore teach us these two great Lessons :

1st, That a Power of working Miracles is a plain Evidence of a Divine Testimony. And,

2^{dly}, That our Saviour had this Evidence for the Truth of his Doctrine and Messiahship. For the

1st, Of all the ways of proving any Person or Thing to come from God, there can be none so certain and infallible, as a Power of working Miracles ; for this is as it were the Broad Seal of Heaven to confirm a Divine Commission, and to testify the Truth of any pretended Revelation : which is evident to any that considers that none but God
can

can alter the Course of Nature, and that he never doth so but for great and weighty Reasons. That God can do so, is evident from his Omnipotent and Almighty Power, which is able to do all things, and to which nothing is impossible: he that made all things out of nothing, can unmake and alter them when he pleases.

This is above the reach of all natural and created Beings, who have all their Power from him, and can do nothing without him; and consequently are so far from doing Miracles, that they cannot of themselves exert any of the common and ordinary Actions of human Life. God is describ'd to be *glorious in Holiness, doing Wonders*: He can raise the Dead, and cure all Diseases with a word speaking, and do whatever pleases him; but this he never doth, but upon weighty occasions: he doth not set this Seal either to a Blank or an Imposture. Now our Saviour's Works being the Effects of a supernatural and divine Power, plainly shew him to come from God, and abundantly confirm the Truth of his Doctrine; which made *Nicodemus* own him for a Teacher come from God, for none could do the Works that he did unless God were with him, John 3. So that he might well appeal to his Miracles, and say, *Believe me for the very Works sake*. And to encourage his Disciples to do so, he tells them in the next words, *Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the Works that I do shall he do also, and greater Works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father*. Where he resumes his former Argument of comforting his Disciples upon his going away from them, telling them, that they may safely rely upon him as the Messiah, and the Works they had seen him do, were great enough to satisfy them of the Truth of what he had said to them: adding for their comfort, that when he was gone, they should do the same or greater Works than he had done; for he was going to the Father, to send the Holy Ghost to them, whereby they should have those miraculous Gifts and Graces, that should enable them to convert the World, to cast down Idols, and to overcome all Opposition: Works of a higher Esteem and greater Excellency, than the Miracles he had wrought among them. *These Signs* (saith he) *shall follow them that believe, in my Name they shall cast out Devils, they shall speak with new Tongues, they shall take up Serpents, if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the Sick, and they shall recover*: Mark 16. 17, 18. which is meant of that

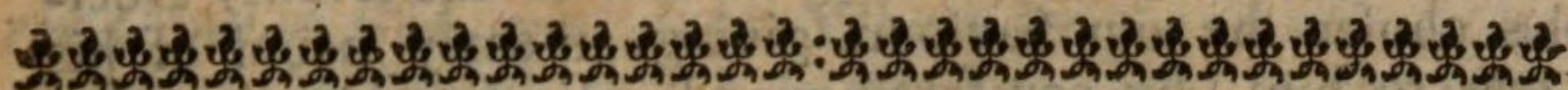
that plentiful Effusion of Divine Power and Grace, that fell on the Apostles upon the Descent of the Holy Ghost, *Acts 2.*

And to beget the greater Confidence in him, he farther tells them, *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorify'd in the Son:* that is, whatever Supply of Grace or Power shall be at any time wanting in any Exigence of your own or the Church, shall upon your Request be granted to you, that the Father may be glorify'd in me, and that you may be enabled to promote the Honour of him that sent me.

Finally, rest assured that *if you ask any thing in my Name, I will do it.* And let this comfort you in my short Absence from you, that you shall want no Assistance or Encouragement in doing what I command you, till I come again and take you to my self, that where I am, there ye may be also.

This is a brief Account of the Gospel for this Day, which contains our Saviour's Discourse with *Philip* the Saint of this Day; wherein he shews himself by his Doctrine and Example to be the true Way that leads to eternal Life, proving by his many Miracles and wonderful Works, that he was sent from God for the Salvation of Mankind, and that we cannot see or know God but in and by him, who is the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person. And tho he was then returning to him, yet he lets his Disciples know, that 'twas to prepare for their Reception, and that his withdrawing from them a while, was greatly for their advantage; for he would send them his Holy Spirit, and give them such Supplies of Grace, and of ghostly Comfort and Assistance, as would shortly bring them to his heavenly Kingdom: wherefore comfort one another with these Words.





DISCOURSE XVII.

The EPISTLE for St. Barnabas's Day.

Acts xi. 22, to the end.

Tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church, which was in Jerufalem: And they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch; who when he came, and had seen the Grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of Heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good Man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of Faith; and much People was added unto the Lord, &c.

THE Saint we remember this Day, is St. Barnabas, who was born at Cyprus of Jewish Parents, and descended of the Tribe of Levi. He was first call'd *Joses* or *Joseph*, and after surnam'd *Barnabas*, for the Consolation he administred to the poor Christians, by selling his Estate for their Relief; as we read, *Acts* 4. 36, 37.

He was educated at *Jerusalem*, where with St. Paul he sat at the feet of the Learned *Gamaliel*; which perhaps occasion'd that great Friendship and Familiarity, that was after between them.

The particular Time of his Conversion to Christianity, is not certainly known; 'tis suppos'd to be a little before St. Paul's Conversion, because when St. Paul went up to *Jerusalem*, and assayed to join himself to the Disciples there, they were all afraid of him, and believ'd not that he was a Disciple; till Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles, and declar'd unto them the Manner of his Conversion, how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him; and how he had preach'd boldly at *Damascus* in the Name of Jesus. *Acts* 9. 26, 27.

He

He is generally affirm'd to be one of the seventy Disciples chosen by our Saviour, giving an early proof of his Love to him, by comforting and relieving his distressed Members.

The Collect for the Day makes mention of the *singular Gifts of the Holy Ghost, with which he was endow'd*; withal teaching us to pray for a competent measure of the *like Gifts*, and *likewise for Grace to use them alway to God's Honour and Glory*.

The Epistle for the Day, of which I am now to speak, gives us some Account of St. Barnabas's first Employment in the Service of the Church; which is usher'd in with these words: *Tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church, which was in Jerusalem; and they sent Barnabas to go as far as Antioch*. The Tidings here refer'd to, was St. Peter's free Converse with, and Preaching unto the Gentiles, which News was brought from *Antioch to Jerusalem*; an Account whereof was briefly this:

St. Peter, who was the Apostle of the Circumcision, and preach'd only to the Jews, was warn'd of God in a Vision, *not to account the Gentiles common and unclean, but freely to eat and converse with them*; thereby perceiving (as himself declares) *that God was no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation he that feareth him and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him*. Accordingly finding that *Cornelius* and many other of the Gentiles believ'd in the Lord Jesus, and receiv'd the Holy Ghost, as well as the Jews, he preach'd to them, and commanded them to be baptiz'd in the Name of the Lord.

Hereupon many of the Brethren of the Circumcision took great offence, and contended with St. Peter about this Freedom, till he had declar'd unto them the heavenly Vision, whereby his Commission was enlarg'd, and how he was order'd to converse with and preach unto the Gentiles. At which *they held their peace, ceas'd their Contention, and glorify'd God, who had to the Gentiles also granted Repentance unto Life*; as we read at large in this Chapter.

This was the News or *Tidings that came to the ears of the Church that was at Jerusalem*, how God had prosper'd the Preaching of the Gospel, and brought in daily many Converts among the Gentiles, who *believ'd in Christ, and turn'd unto the Lord*.

Whereupon the Apostles, who were then at Jerusalem, sent forth Barnabas, to go and confirm them from City to City,

City, as far as Antioch; who when he came there, and saw the Grace of God, was glad. Where by the Grace of God is meant the Gospel, which is often so stiled in the New Testament; the preaching whereof being an Act of the greatest Grace and Favour that was ever shew'd to Mankind. And when *Barnabas* saw the good success of it, he rejoic'd greatly to find what progress the Gospel had made among them, and exhorted them all with full purpose of Heart to cleave unto the Lord; that is, cordially to stick to Christ, and stedfastly to hold fast their Faith in him, that nothing might draw them from him.

And here the Writer of these *Acts* takes occasion to give a Character of *St. Barnabas*, and to set forth the Success of his Labours, saying, *He was a good Man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of Faith, and much People was added unto the Lord.* He was a good Man, one that studied the Good of the Church, and the Welfare of Mankind, as appear'd by his Zeal in propagating Christianity, and his Charity in supporting his Christian Brethren. Again, *He was full of the Holy Ghost, and of Faith*; he was endu'd with many excellent Gifts and Graces of the Spirit, with Wisdom, and Knowledg, and the Fear of God, abounding in Faith and Piety, and in the Work of the Lord. And this his Labour was not in vain in the Lord, for by his means much People was added unto the Lord: He made many Converts to Christianity, and brought great Numbers to believe and receive the Gospel; he was call'd to the converting and confirming the Gentile World.

And because this Work was too great for a single Hand, *Barnabas departed to Tarsus, to seek for Saul*, to engage him to join with him for the accomplishing of so great a Work: To which end they both return'd again to *Antioch*, where they labour'd together a whole year in the Establishment of that Church; for they frequently assembled themselves with the Church, and taught much People, instructing and confirming all that came to them. And when both Jews and Gentiles promiscuously receiv'd the Gospel, they became alike the Disciples of Christ, and being all united into one Body of the Church, they were united in one Name too.

And the Disciples were call'd Christians first in Antioch; where the Partition-Wall between Jew and Gentile being broken down, and both admitted into one Fold, under one Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, all Names of Distinction

tion were taken away, and they became *all one in Christ Jesus*. This is imply'd in the new Name of *Christians* then given to them, who were before call'd *Disciples*, *Believers*, and *Brethren*, and by their Enemies *Nazarens* and *Galileans*. But here they were all stil'd *Christians*, which Name is continu'd among us to this day.

We find a Prophecy in *Isaiah*, that *when the Gentiles should come in and see the Righteousness of God, all Kings should behold their Glory, and they should be call'd by a new Name, which the Mouth of the Lord should name*; Isa. 62. 2. This Prophecy is suppos'd to have been fulfill'd at this time, when the *Disciples* were all call'd *Christians* first in *Antioch*; at which time this new Name was first given both to Jews and Gentiles, who by this Divine Signature were both mark'd up for Christ's Flock.

But how was this new Name given? Why, that we may well think was not by Chance, nor in any common or ordinary way, for then the Holy Scripture would not have taken such notice of it; but by some Divine Impulse and Direction: for the new Name mention'd by *Isaiah* was such *as the Mouth of the Lord should name*; meaning, that it should be dictated by him, or be order'd and directed by his Holy Spirit.

This some have thought to be imply'd in the word here us'd in the Original, which is not *ἐναλῆντο*, but *χρηματίσαν*, which signifies not an ordinary way of naming a thing, but the doing of it in a divine and oracular manner; and gives us to understand, that this Name of Christian was not given upon a common or slight occasion, but for weighty Reasons, and by God's own Appointment.

But to go on with the Epistle for the Day, the next words tell us, that *in those Days came Prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch*; that is, some chief Pastors, possibly Bishops of *Judea*, that had the Gift of Prophecy, were order'd to come there by the Church at *Jerusalem*, to settle some Matters.

These Prophets and Teachers, during their Stay at *Antioch*, were to ordain Elders, and set in order things that were wanting; and one day *as they ministred to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said unto them, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the Work whereunto I have call'd them*: that is, they were either by a Revelation from God, or by some secret Impulse of his Holy Spirit, commanded to ordain or consecrate *Barnabas* and *Saul* to the Apostleship, to which

which God had already design'd them : *And when they had fasted, and pray'd, and laid their Hands on them* (a Ceremony us'd in conferring of Orders ever since) *they sent them away ; Acts 13.* And being thus sent forth by the Holy Ghost, they went first to *Seleucia*, and from thence to *Cyprus*, the native Country of *St. Barnabas*, where they preach'd the Word of God with good Success, and did many wonderful Works for its Confirmation. At *Paphos*, a City in that Island, one *Sergius Paulus*, Deputy of the Country, a prudent Man, hearing of *Barnabas* and *Saul*, call'd for them, and desir'd to hear from them the Word of God ; but *Elymas* a Sorcerer, then with him, withstood the Apostles, seeking to turn away the Deputy from the Faith. At which *Saul*, who was also call'd *Paul*, mov'd by the Holy Ghost, set his Eyes upon him, and after a sharp Rebuke, with a Look of his Countenance, struck him with Blindness ; which when the Deputy saw, he believ'd, being astonish'd at the Doctrine of the Lord, as we read in that Chapter.

From *Paphos* they went to *Perga* in *Pamphylia*, where *Mark* their Kinsman and Companion left them, being discourag'd by the Dangers they met with in their Travels : from whence, by a Persecution rais'd against them, they departed, and came to *Iconium* and *Lystra* ; where finding an impotent Cripple, that had been lame from his Mother's Womb, and never had walk'd ; and perceiving he had Faith to be heal'd, they with a loud Voice said, *Stand upright on thy Feet* : and upon the bare speaking of those words, he immediately leap'd and walk'd about. At the sight hereof, the People were astonish'd, and cry'd up the Apostles for Gods, stiling *Barnabas*, for the Gravity of his Countenance and Carriage, by the name of *Jupiter*, their supreme Deity, and *Paul*, *Mercurius*, because he was the chief Speaker ; and the People were just ready to do Sacrifice unto them, had not the Apostles with much difficulty restrain'd them, checking their Idolatry, and exhorting them to turn from these Vanities unto the living God ; as you may read, *Acts 14.*

After this, there arose some Difference between these two great Friends and Apostles, *Paul* and *Barnabas* ; it began with the Controversy of imposing the Jewish Rites upon the Gentile Converts, which *Barnabas* at first strenuously oppos'd, and went with *Paul* to consult the Council at *Jerusalem*, where this Matter was determin'd in favour of

the *Gentile* Converts, that this Yoke should not be put upon them.

But afterwards *Barnabas* was drawn aside by *St. Peter*, too far to dissemble and betray this Christian Liberty to please the *Jews*, which *St. Paul* blam'd and reprov'd in him; whereupon another Difference soon arose between them: for these two Apostles having agreed to visit the Brethren in every City where they had preach'd the Word of God, and to see how they did, *Barnabas* determin'd to take his Kinsman *John*, surnam'd *Mark*, along with them; but *Paul* thought not fit to take him with them, because he before left them at *Pamphylia*, and went not on with the Work. This Contention was so sharp between them, that they parted asunder one from the other; and so *Barnabas* took *Mark* and went to *Cyprus*, and *Paul* chose *Silas* and went to the Churches of *Syria* and *Cilicia*: of these things we read at large in *Acts* 15. and *Gal.* 2.

This Contest however did, by the Wisdom of God's Providence, turn to the Good and Benefit of the Church; for by their parting, the Doctrine of Christ and the Gospel spread wider, and became more diffusive than if they had continu'd together. And *Mark* (as one hath observ'd) much amended by *St. Paul's* Reproof, and became more constant and diligent in the Work of the Gospel; inso-much that *St. Paul* sent for him, and gave that Commendation of him, that *he was profitable to him for the Work of the Ministry*; 2 *Tim.* 4. 11.

But 'tis time to return to the Prophets whom we left at *Antioch*, where the Epistle for the Day tells us of one of them, nam'd *Agabus*, who stood up and signify'd by the Spirit, that there should be great Dearth throughout all the World; meaning, thro all the Land of *Judea*, and of the Roman Empire, which came to pass in the days of *Claudius Cæsar*. History makes mention of two great Dearth's in the Days of *Claudius*, within the space of three years, of which this is suppos'd to be the first and greatest, when the Brethren in *Judea* were reduc'd to extreme Want, and to all the Miseries of a severe Famine: then it was that the Disciples, every Man, according to his Ability, determin'd to send Relief unto the Brethren that dwelt in *Judea*. The Charity of all good Christians was then mov'd to a liberal Contribution, to support them under their great Necessities; and this liberal Supply or Collection, made by the Christians in *Antioch*, was sent to the Elders or chief Ministers

sters of *Judea*, by the hands of *Barnabas* and *Saul*, whose great Care and Fidelity herein is here particularly mention'd with Honour.

These are the principal Passages relating to the Life and Actions of *St. Barnabas*, the Saint we celebrate this Day. For his Writings, we find only one Epistle written by him, which is generally by the Antients ascrib'd to him, tho some suppose it spurious, because it is not put in the Canon of Scripture.

But I may not conclude the Life of this Saint, without taking some notice of his Death, which is suppos'd to be at *Salamis*, a City in the Island of *Cyprus*. The manner of it is said to be this: He was set upon by certain *Jews* that came from *Syria*, as he was disputing in the Synagogue against the Obligation and Continuance of the Rites and Sacrifices of *Moses's* Law being all fulfill'd in Christ; at which they were so highly incens'd, that they seiz'd him in the Night, and carry'd him without the City, where they put him to great Tortures, and after ston'd him to death.

Thus liv'd and dy'd this eminent Saint and Companion of *St. Paul*, and was bury'd (as some tell us) by his Kinsman *Mark*, in a Cave not far distant from that City.

We have seen some of the singular Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, with which this Holy Apostle *St. Barnabas* was endu'd; and are taught by the Church to pray, that we may not be left destitute of some measure of the said Gifts, nor yet of Grace, to use them always to God's Honour and Glory. To which end let us,

1. Endeavour to imitate, in some measure, his exceeding great Bounty and Liberality, in selling all and giving to the Poor, which the rich Man in the Gospel refus'd to do, and chose rather to part with his Saviour, than any part of his Estate for that purpose; whereas the Saint of this Day compassionated the Necessities of his Fellow-Christians, and sent Relief to the indigent Brethren of *Judea*, contributing to the Wants of the Needy, and refreshing the Bowels of distress'd Saints: which should teach us to go and do likewise.

2. Let us imitate his great Zeal and Diligence in propagating the Faith of Christ. We read of *Barnabas* and *Saul's* indefatigable Industry in travelling up and down, and scattering the Light of the Gospel in dark and distant Regions; which should teach us to spare no Pains to rescue

Men from Ignorance and Error, and to bring them to the Knowledg and Understanding of Divine Truths, turning them from Darknes unto Light, and from the power of Satan unto God; knowing, that he that turneth a Sinner from the Error of his Ways, shall save his Soul alive, and shine as the Stars in the Kingdom of Heaven.

3. From the Disciples being all united in one Name, and call'd Christians first in *Antioch*, let us learn to unite together in one Bond of Peace and Love. Both Jew and Gentile were then gather'd into one Flock, and taken into one Fold of the Catholick Church; at which time it was thought fit that all former Names of Distinction should be laid aside, and that they should all have the general Name and Appellation of Christians, to teach them to keep the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace: and therefore we find *St. Paul* exhorting the *Corinthians*, by the name of Christ, to speak all the same things, that there might be no Divisions among them, and to be perfectly join'd together in the same Mind, and the same Judgment; 1 Cor. 1. 10. and not only so, but that they should answer the Import and Obligation of that holy Name, which was to believe and practise what Christ had taught them, to follow his Example, to cleave to him with full purpose of Heart, and to depart from all Iniquity.

Lastly, From the Contest that happen'd between *St. Paul* and *Barnabas* about the Jewish Converts, we may learn, that the best Men have their Failings, that we all here know but in part, and that Differences may arise in lesser Matters, even among good Men; which should make us bear with one another's Infirmities, and avoid as much as possible all Contention and Strife, longing for that happy time when all these Imperfections shall be done away, and we shall be all join'd together in one Fellowship and Communion, singing the Praises of our Maker to all Eternity: To which blessed State, God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, *Amen*.



DISCOURSE XVIII.

The GOSPEL for St. Barnabas's Day.

St. John xv. 12——17.

This is my Commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater Love hath no Man than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends; ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not Servants, &c. but Friends, &c.

THE Saint of this Day was noted for an Example of great Love and Charity to Mankind, one that had his Name from it, being call'd *Barnabas*, which signifies *a Son of Consolation*, from the great Comfort and Relief he was wont to afford to distress'd Persons. For which reason the Church selected this Portion of Scripture, to be read as the Gospel for this Day; wherein our Love to one another, in all the Acts and good Offices of it, is recommended to us by the Precept and Example of our blessed Saviour, beginning with these words:

This is my Commandment, that ye love one another, as I have lov'd you. Where I am to consider, first, The Nature of this Love; next, the Measure of it, and then the Command about it.

For the Nature of this Love, it hath two excellent Properties; the one of avoiding all things hurtful; the other of doing all things profitable and beneficial to one another.

1. 'Tis a known Property of Love, to restrain Men from doing the least harm to any; *Love thinketh no Evil* (saith the Apostle) 1 Cor. 13. 5. it harbours no evil Thoughts, and much less any evil Designs against any: *Love worketh no Ill to his Neighbour, therefore Love is the fulfilling of the Law*; Rom. 13. 10. it will hurt none in Body, Goods, or Name, offering Violence to no Man's Person,

son, nor Rapine to his Goods, nor Reflections on his Name, which are all Effects of a rancorous and evil Mind, and are far remov'd from every pious and vertuous Soul. Again,

2. Another Property of Love, is not only to do no Evil, but to do all manner of Good, to do things profitable and pleasing to one another, and to be ever ready, by all good means, to promote each other's Interest and Welfare; to be aiding in all Difficulties, faithful in all Dealings, favourable in all Censures, and helpful in all Necessities: This is the Love we are to bear to one another.

For the Measure of it, 'tis as Christ hath lov'd us: *Love one another* (saith he) *as I have loved you*. Sometimes the Love of our selves is made the measure of our loving others, as the Precept, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*. But because Men may be sometimes too partial and indulgent to themselves, and so love themselves too much; and at other times too careless and negligent of themselves, and so love themselves too little, this cannot be always a sure and safe Rule or Measure to walk by: and therefore we have here a higher and better Measure and Direction given us in this Matter; and that is, *to love one another, as Christ hath loved us*. His Love is ever true, regular, and unfeign'd, and such should ours be to one another: not that we can come up to the same pitch and degree of Affection with him, or give the same Demonstrations of it that he hath shew'd to us; none, no not the best of Men, can arrive to that perfection: but we are to love with the same Sincerity, tho not with the same Equality, and we are to be as desirous of one another's Welfare and Salvation, as Christ was of ours, tho we cannot do so much for it. Our Love must be of the same kind with his, tho not to the same degree. To convince us of this,

We have, in the next Verse, an Instance of the highest degree of Affection that Man can attain to; for *greater Love hath no Man than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends*. The greatest Expression of Love we can shew to our dearest Friends, is to adventure to die for them; but our Saviour's Love to us hath run higher, in laying down his Life for his bitterest Enemies; *for when we were Enemies* (saith the Apostle) *we were reconcil'd unto God by the Death of his Son*. He shed his Blood to atone for the Guilt of them that shed it; and tho it be very difficult for us to attain to so high a degree of Affection, yet we must

must endeavour to imitate it, and to come as near to it as we can.

And then (saith he) ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, and have done before you. Tho you have been Enemies to me before by evil Works, yet if you observe my Precept of loving one another, as I have loved you, you shall be reckon'd in the number of my Friends. Your Obedience to my Doctrine and Precepts will be the best Testimony of your Love and Duty towards me, and that will be the best Attractive of my Kindness and Affection towards you; that will remove all Enmity, and beget a firm League of Peace and Amity between us; 'twill set you above the Rank of Servants, and intitle you to all the Endearments of Friends. So he tells the Disciples in the next words, Henceforth I call you not Servants, for the Servant knoweth not what his Lord doth; but I have call'd you Friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. Where we may observe,

1st, The different Conditions of Servants and Friends, and how much the one comes short of the other. And,

2dly, That Christ treats his Followers not after the vile rate of Servants, but after the more endearing manner of Friends. For the

1st, Servants you know are plac'd in a low and mean Condition, in a state of Subjection and Servitude. And in the Ages and Times when our Saviour spake these words, their Condition was much worse than now it is; for Servants then were generally reputed and used as Slaves, they were bought and sold for Mony, and therefore reckon'd amongst the other Goods and Chattels of their Masters, as it is in some places to this day. And still the Name of a Servant denotes a slavish and degenerated State of Body and Mind. To this the Apostle alludes, in saying, We have not receiv'd the Spirit of Bondage again to fear; Rom. 8. 5. He that serves especially a hard Master, does all things in fear; and if the Master withdraws his Eye, he soon withhold his Hand: He is scarce a free Agent in any thing he does, but all his Actions are influenc'd either by Force or Fear. Moreover,

The Name and Condition of a Servant imports not only a mean, but mercenary Disposition; one that doth nothing for Love, but all things for Hire or Reward, and makes his Pay the sole Motive and Measure of his Obedience. He neither loves the Person commanding, nor the Thing com-

manded, but is drawn to his Duty only from Principles of Gain or Dread; which betokens a sordid, selfish, and servile Spirit.

But the main thing mention'd in the Text, to shew the abject Condition of a Servant, is the distance he is kept at from his Master, together with his Ignorance and Unacquaintance with his Master's Actions and Designs; *The Servant knoweth not what his Lord doth.* A Master locks up his Mind as well as his Treasure from his Servant, who is to stand aloof off sometimes from his Presence, but always from his Counsels: for he that makes his Servant his Counsellor, sometimes makes him his Governour too; and by admitting him too far into his Secrets, by degrees makes him his Master. Freedom and Familiarity oftentimes lessens the Master, and puffs up the Servant, who thereby becomes insolent and intolerable: and if he lends him too much of his Ear, he will repay him with too much of his Tongue. A Servant therefore must be stav'd off to a due distance, lest he get ground by too near Approaches: He is to know nothing but his Master's Commands, and in these too not always to know the Reason of them, but to yield a ready Obedience and Submission to them.

This is the Nature, and these are the Qualifications, that belong to the State and Condition of a Servant.

But the Quality and Treatment of a Friend is quite different: for,

1. He hath still a Freedom and Easiness of Access; both House, and Heart, and Hand, are all open for the welcome Reception of a Friend. He is not kept at a distance like a Servant or Stranger, but is admitted into the nearest Union and closest Embraces. We open to Men of Business with Caution and Difficulty, but we receive the Visits of Friends with Facility and Delight. A Friend is often stiled another Self, having as it were but one Soul in two Bodies, which cannot but beget the greatest Endearments. Again,

2. 'Tis the Property of Friends to put the best Construction upon the Words and Actions of each other: *Love covereth a multitude of Sins*, saith the Apostle; it will hide a Scar, when it cannot remove it. Love is never so blind, as in espying Faults and Failings; and Malice is never so quick-sighted as in discerning Spots and Blemishes: a true Friend will rather cast a Veil to cover, than expose and discover another's Nakedness; he will bury Weaknesses in Silence, and proclaim Merits and Virtues on the house-top.

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In short, true Friendship never aggravates, but always excuses the Failings of a Friend. A wise Heathen observ'd, that all things have two Handles, the one good, and the other bad ; and that Friends always took them by the best, and Enemies by the worst Handle : and this is a good Touchstone to try the Truth of Friendship.

Indeed, there are few Actions so ill (as one hath well observ'd) but will admit of some Extenuation or Excuse, either from Ignorance or Inadvertence, from Passion or Surprise, from Company or Temptation, and the like ; which may in a great measure excuse, tho not wholly justify the Action.

Now a good Man will use these Apologies and Alleviations of Faults for the good of his Friend ; whereas a bad Man will aggravate and urge things with Rigour, to do another a bad turn : the one proceeds from the Favours and Fervours of Friendship, the other from the Frowns and Fury of an Enemy. In short, a true Friend will rather be an Advocate to plead for, than take upon him the Office of a Judg to censure and condemn another : and therefore a proud Person can never be a true Friend, because he commonly overlooks the Merits and Worth of others, to magnify his own ; nor can Backbiters or Detractors be safely taken into that Relation, for such will blacken others, that themselves may shine the brighter, and blazon their Infirmities, to set forth their own Excellencies : which is opposite to, and the Reverse of all true Friendship.

3. Another Property of Friends is to sympathize in the Joys and Sorrows of one another, to *rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep* ; that is, to bear a part in the Afflictions, as well as in the Prosperity of each other. And this (as a great Man hath observ'd) will work two excellent, but contrary Effects ; it will double Joys, and lessen Sorrows : for there is no Man that imparteth his Joys, but joys the more ; and no Man that imparteth his Grievs to his Friend, but grieveth the less : Like a Burden, which lying upon one Man's shoulders, is heavy and hard to be borne, but being parted and lying upon more, becomes light and easy. And every one knows and finds by Experience, that Sorrows by being communicated grow less, and Joys greater.

4. Another Act or Office of Friendship is the imparting of Secrets ; which ever opens, and many times eases the Heart. A Secret may be sometimes too big for a single Breast,

Breast, and may require the enlarging and reposing of it in another. Now this can be no where safely lodg'd but in the Bosom of a Friend. A Secret is many times too dear and tender a thing to be committed to every Breast, neither will a Wise-Man let such things go out of his own Bosom, but where he hath another safely to receive it. For which reason it was wisely said, that none should know the Secrets of a Man's Heart, but his God, his Conscience, and his Friend. Hence *Abraham was call'd the Friend of God*, James 2. 23. and was treated by him as such, by having his secret Counsels communicated to him; *Shall I hide from Abraham (saith God) what I am about to do?* Gen. 18. 17. as if it were a Breach of Friendship to reserve or conceal the knowledg of his Designs from him. And God is said to *speak to Moses, as a Man speaketh to his Friend*, Exod. 33. 11. meaning, that God admitted him to the same Familiarity of Address, and to the same Freedom of imparting his Mind, as we are wont to do to our intimate Friends. And this Privilege is still continu'd to God's faithful People; for *the Secret of the Lord* (saith the Psalmist) *is with them that fear him*, Psal. 25. 14. And because we want not only another Heart to receive our Secrets, but likewise another Head in many cases to advise and counsel us; this is therefore reckon'd another Act and Office of a Friend, to direct and assist us in all our Affairs. This likewise God is said to do for us, by enlightning our Minds with the Knowledg of the Truth, and by being Eyes to the Blind and Understanding to the Ignorant; he is call'd therefore *the Mighty Counsellor*.

Thus we see both the different Nature and the different Treatment of Servants and of Friends: the one being of a servile, mercenary, and degenerate Temper, are kept at a distance from the Master's Presence and Counsels; the other being receiv'd into a higher Relation, have a greater Freedom of Access, are admitted as it were Privy-Counsellors, and acquainted with the Secrets and Jewels of the Cabinet.

2dly, Now our Saviour here tells his Disciples and Followers, that he calls them not Servants, nor useth them as such; but he styles and treateth them as Friends, not keeping them at a distance as Servants use to be, and in ignorance of his Counsels and Designs, but allowing them free Access to him, to come boldly to ask Grace and Help in time of need: not putting them upon any hard Services, nor making

king any hard Constructions of their Ways and Actions, but making all favourable Allowances, and like a merciful High-Priest having a Fellow-feeling of all their Infirmities. In short, he tells them, that whereas Servants are many times strangers to their Master's mind, and *know not what their Master doth*, he on the contrary receives his Followers as Friends and Confidants into his Bosom: *For all things that he hath heard of his Father, he makes known unto them.* He communicates to them the Knowledge of all things that any way tend to their benefit or comfort, and hides nothing from them, that is fitting or necessary for them to know.

But there is one Property of Christ's Friendship to his Followers, that far exceeds all the Friendships of the World; and that is, its Constancy and never-failing Duration: *for whom he loveth, he loveth unto the end*; and such as come to him, he will by no means cast off. The Friendships of the World are oftentimes founded upon a bad bottom, and so are vain, variable, and uncertain; they are many times taken up by Levity, and laid down by Humour: But Christ's Friendship is like himself, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, without variableness or shadow of change. He is not like those false counterfeit Friends, that will smile upon you to-day, and scarce know you to-morrow: his Friendship hath no such Hollowness or Unsoundness in it, but is constant and unchangeable, and nothing is able to abate or extinguish his Affection; his Love is unalterably fix'd on his Friends, and neither the Malice of Men or the Rage of Devils can pluck the meanest of them out of his Bosom.

Now because the Use and Benefit of a Friend is so vastly great, wise Men are wont to use great Care and Caution in chusing them; for out of their Acquaintance they chuse Familiars, and out of them Friends. But Christ here tells his Disciples, *You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*; meaning, that he prevented them with his Loving-kindness, and was a better Friend to them than they were to themselves: for tho they had neither Judgment nor Inclination to seek his Friendship, yet he of his own accord selected them for his Friends, and treated them with all the Endearments belonging to that Relation. His Love to them was free and undeserv'd, having of his own good-will made choice of them for his Friends and Favourites; and

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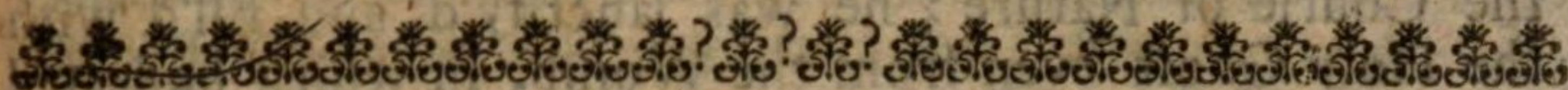
that not only for their own benefit and advantage, but to promote the good of others.

For *I have ordain'd you* (saith he) *that ye should go and bring forth Fruit; and that your Fruit should remain*: that is, he appointed his Disciples to go abroad into all the World, to abound in good Works, and to bring in an Harvest of Converts to his Faith and Religion; which good Fruits would remain with them, and redound both to God's Glory and their own. Of which they should have this Benefit at present, to have all their Prayers heard, and all their Wants supply'd, for which they address unto God in his Name; that *whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my Name* (saith he) *he may give it to you.*

This is the Sum of the Gospel for this Day, which contains the great Christian Duty of *loving one another, as Christ also hath loved us*; recommended to us by the Example of *Barnabas* the Saint of this Day, who was an eminent Pattern of this Divine Grace. By this we shall make Christ our Friend, who is the best Friend and Benefactor in the World; *Ye are my Friends* (saith he) *if ye do what I command you.* And the principal Command he lays upon his Followers, to cement his and their Hearts together, is the loving of one another. To this he hath given us many Precepts, and shew'd himself the best Pattern; for he condescended to be a Man, merely to be a Friend, and took upon him our Flesh, that he might have the Tendernefs and Compassions of our human Nature; and in a word, that he might have our Hearts, and we his.

Wherefore let us labour and pray for this excellent Grace, that God would plant the Love of himself and our Neighbour in our Hearts, that it may grow up and appear in all our Actions; so shall we partake of his Love here, and for ever abide in it hereafter.





DISCOURSE XIX.

The EPISTLE for St. John Baptist's Day.

Isa. xl. 1——12.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my People, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her Warfare is accomplish'd, &c. The Voice of him that cryeth in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make strait in the Desert a Highway for our God. Every Valley shall be exalted, and every Mountain and Hill shall be made low; the Crooked shall be made strait, and the rough Places plain, and the Glory of God shall be revealed, &c.

WE are this day to celebrate the Memory of St. John the Baptist, who was the Harbinger and Fore-runner of our Saviour; of whom the Collect for the Day observes,

1st, His wonderful Birth. And,

2dly, The great Business or Errand upon which he was sent; which was to prepare the Way of the Lord, by preaching of Repentance. And from both it teaches us to pray for Grace to follow his Doctrine, by truly repenting according to his Preaching; and his Example, by constantly speaking the Truth, boldly rebuking Vice, and patiently suffering for the Truth's sake, thro Jesus Christ our Lord.

For his Birth, that was attended with many extraordinary Circumstances. His Parents were both aged and childless, his Mother Elizabeth barren, and his Father Zacharias well stricken in Years. And yet his Birth was foretold by an Angel, which was a Wonder too big for Zachary's Faith, who was therefore stricken with a miraculous Dumbness, till it was made good; at once to confirm his Faith, and to punish his Infidelity. His Conception was miraculous, being,

being, as *Isaac* was, a Child of Promise, above and beside the Course of Nature; he was sanctify'd and fill'd with the Holy Ghost even from the Womb, in which he leap'd for joy at our Saviour's presence three months before he was born, *Luke* 1. 44. But of this, and of the Course of his Life, and the End of his Coming, we have a farther Account in the Epistle and Gospel for this Day.

The Epistle, of which I am now to treat, begins thus: *Comfort ye, comfort ye my People, saith your God: Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, &c.* Where this Evangelical Prophet (as he is often stil'd) plainly foretold the glad Tidings of the Gospel, by the coming of the Messias, and prophetically proclaim'd the Joy and Comfort that would follow thereupon; bringing in God Almighty thus publishing his mind, and bespeaking his Prophets to comfort and cheer up his People, that they should not droop or sink under any worldly Trouble, but bear them up with Joy and Gladness, whatever may befall them: *Comfort ye, comfort ye my People, saith he.* Where he bids them to double their Joys, like that of the Apostle, *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice*; *Phil.* 4. And here he doubles and trebles it, saying, *Comfort ye, comfort ye my People; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem*: to shew not only the exceeding great need, but the great cause they had of Joy upon the comfortable News of a future Messias; and that because thereby *the Warfare of Jerusalem*, by which is meant the Church of God, *is accomplish'd*. In some Translations 'tis *her Time is accomplish'd*; that is, the Time fix'd for the Church's Minority, under the strait Discipline and Pedagogy of the Law, is at an end by the Freedom and Fruition of Christ's spiritual Kingdom: by which means *her Iniquity is pardon'd*, and the Severity of the Sufferings due to it is in great a measure over; *For she hath receiv'd of the Lord's hand double for all her Sins*: not double degrees of Punishment, but double Measures of Mercy; being dealt with not according to the just Merits of their Sins, but according to the multitude of his tender Mercies.

This inestimable Favour was promis'd and prophesy'd of of old, and was alone purchas'd and procur'd for us by the Messias, who was to be the sole Mediator between God and Man, to make our peace, and to reconcile Sinners unto God.

Now because it was highly fit, that so great a Person should have some eminent Harbinger to go before, to give notice

notice of his coming, and to usher him into the World ; therefore God the Father promis'd to *send his Messenger, who should prepare his way before him* ; Mal. 3. 1. And this Messenger was *John the Baptist*, the Saint of this Day, who is describ'd here by the Prophet *Isaias* to be *the Voice of him that cryeth in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make strait in the Desert a Highway for our God* : call'd therefore *Angelus Domini*, a Person ordain'd of God to be the Herald to proclaim the Coming of his Son into the World. For which reason he is said to be greater than a Prophet, one of whom *Elias* the highest of the Prophets was but a Type.

Of the fulfilling of these things in the Person of *St. John*, we have an Account from all the four Evangelists. From *St. Matthew* 3. 1, 2, &c. *In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the Wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*

In those days, that is, in the days of *Herod* Governour of *Judea*, and of *Tiberius* the Roman Emperor, came *John the Baptist* : so call'd, not for the corporal Washings and ceremonial Purifications in use among the Jews, which gave many of their Doctors the Title of Baptists or Washers ; but from *John's* baptizing the many Profelytes that resorted to him in the River *Jordan*, and consecrating Water to the mystical washing away of Sin : and chiefly for his having the honour of baptizing our Saviour, which gave him in a more eminent manner the Title of *Baptist*.

Moreover, This *John* came preaching in the Wilderness of *Judea* : his preaching was the publishing of Christ, and proclaiming the glad Tidings of the Kingdom of Heaven, stil'd therefore the first Gospel-Preacher. The Place of his preaching was *in the Wilderness of Judea* ; so the Prophecy of *Isaias* here foretold, by calling him *the Voice of him that cryeth in the Wilderness* : therein resembling *Elias*, who liv'd for the most part in the Forest of Mount *Carmel*, and was fed by a Raven in the Wilderness. Accordingly *St. John* is said to be *in the Desert, until the time of his shewing unto Israel*. God can consecrate a Desert into a Church, and make Religion thrive and become fruitful in a barren Wilderness. The Doctrine that he preach'd there, was the Doctrine of Repentance ; *saying, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. This is the first Lesson to be learnt in Christ's School ; *St. John* began with it, to make way for our Saviour, for which reason he is stiled
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his Precursor or Fore-runner, by proclaiming to the Jews the near Approach of the Messias; that he whom they had so long look'd for was then nigh at hand, that he was speedily to enter upon his Kingdom, and therefore they would do well to break off their Sins by Repentance, and by Reformation of Life fit themselves to receive him. St. Mark began his Gospel with this same *Voice crying in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make his Paths strait*; Mark i. 2, 3. And so did both St. Luke and St. John; and all of them from this Prophecy of *Isaias*, which they quote from him as fulfill'd in *John the Baptist*, saying, *This is he that was spoken of by the Prophet Isaias, the Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, &c.* they all bearing witness of *John*, as he did of Christ, calling upon the World to make ready for his Reception, by leaving their old sinful Courses, and turning unto God by Newness of Life.

Now this preparing the Way of the Lord, is the levelling and making strait and plain all places before him, as is wont to be done before the coming of great Princes: 'tis express'd here by *Isaias* thus; *Every Valley shall be exalted, and every Mountain and Hill shall be made low, and the Crooked shall be made strait, and the rough places plain: and the Glory of the Lord shall be reveal'd, and all Flesh shall see it together, for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* All which is to be understood not in a literal, but spiritual sense, according to the nature of Christ's spiritual Kingdom: for this levelling and making strait was not meant of material Hills and Highways, but of what was high and ambitious, low and base, perverse and crooked in Mens Lives and Actions; all which were to be regulated and set right to entertain this spiritual Prince, who was to reign not so much over our Bodies as our Souls, and to set up his Kingdom within our Hearts. Pride and Vain-glory are the Mountains to be brought low; Humility and Lowliness of Mind are the Valleys that are to be exalted; Deceit and Hypocrisy are the crooked Paths that must be made strait; Oppression and Injustice the rough Ways that must be made plain. In a word, every exorbitant Lust and Affection must be subdu'd and brought into subjection to the Obedience of Faith.

This rectifying, smoothing, and levelling our Desires, is the *preparing the Way of the Lord, and making his Paths strait*; which St. John advis'd all Men to do, to qualify them

them for the Reception of our Saviour, that they might receive Benefit and Salvation from him. Which holy Office he perform'd not by putting them upon any worldly Pomp or magnificent Shows, which our Saviour wholly declin'd; as altogether unsuitable to the Ends of his coming; but by calling upon them, with pure Souls and reform'd Manners to meet and receive this most holy Prince. To which end, *St. John* was order'd to appear not in Feasting, or gorgeous Attire, nor in any stately Court, or populous City or Palace; but in the most rigid Fasting, in rough Apparel, and in an uncultivated Desert. He was sent before to baptize and cleanse the whole Nation, and to purge them from their former Sins by Repentance, that they might become fit to entertain this Heavenly King, and be capable of receiving the Graces and Effusions of his Holy Spirit.

This the Prophet *Isaiah* here foretold, as the best way of revealing the Glory of the Lord; to make it visible to all Men, that all Flesh may see it together: being the way that God himself had ordain'd; for we are here told, that the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

But the Voice that was order'd to cry, *Prepare ye the Way of the Lord*, or make ready for the Messiah's coming in the Flesh, was bid to cry again; and being ask'd, *What it should cry?* was answer'd, that all Flesh is Grass, and all the Goodliness thereof as the Flower of the Field: the Grass withereth, the Flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. That this may leave the deeper Impression, the Prophet doubles and repeats it again: *Surely the People is Grass, the Grass withereth, the Flower fadeth, but the Word of the Lord shall stand for ever*: signifying to us, that the Messiah's Coming was not for any carnal or secular Ends, for all worldly Glories and sensual Pleasures are fading, transitory, and wither away; but he came for more sublime and spiritual purposes, to shew us the way to Heaven, and to bring us to Glories that are more permanent and lasting, and will abide for ever.

The former of these Cries was utter'd by *St. John* in the Wilderness of *Judea*; the latter by *St. Peter* in his first Epistle to the scatter'd Brethren: where, in *Chap. i. 24, 25*: alluding to these words of *Isaiah*, he proclaims all Flesh to be Grass, and all the Glory of Man to be as the Flower of Grass: the Grass withereth, and the Flower thereof fadeth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.

Now all Flesh is said to be Grass, partly in a literal, but chiefly in a mystical or metaphorical sense.

For the first, all Flesh may in some measure, even in a literal sense, be said to be Grass; for all the Beasts of the Field are fed and nourish'd by Grass, which by Digestion is turn'd into the Matter and Substance of their Flesh; and these again, who are but Grass converted into Flesh, become the Food and Nourishment of Mankind: so that Man, upon one or two Removes, may even in a literal sense be said to be Grass, because his Flesh is supply'd and recruited by those Creatures, whose whole Substance is but Grass carnify'd, or by Digestion turn'd into Flesh.

But all Flesh is chiefly in a figurative or metaphorical sense call'd and compar'd to Grass, for the Instability and perishing Nature of it: for as the *Grass in the Morning is green and groweth up, but in the Evening it is cut down, dry'd up, and wither'd*; even so (saith the Psalmist) *we consume away in thy Displeasure, and are afraid at thy wrathful Indignation*: Psal. 90. 6, 7. Human Flesh is sometimes fat and well-liking, but in a little time sinks, and pines and dies away: *It is cut down like the Grass, and wither'd even as the green Herb*; Psal. 37. 2.

And as all Flesh is compar'd to Grass for the withering nature of it, so all the Glory and Goodliness of Man is compar'd to the Flower of the Field, for its fading and decay: *The Grass withereth, and the Flower thereof fadeth and falleth away*. Where by the Glory or Goodliness of Man we are to understand all those Excellencies or Advantages, that Men are apt to set a high value upon, or to glory in; such as Honour, Wealth, Beauty, Strength, and the like: all which are but like so many fading Flowers, which soon wither and die away. Honour is but a little vain Breath or Puff of Wind, which soon vanishes and comes to nothing. Riches take to themselves wings, and fly away like an Eagle, the swiftest of Birds; and if their Owners do not, their Heirs will surely set them flying. Beauty, compos'd of the Redness of the Rose, and Paleness of the Lilly, like them is a very fading Flower, which is soon at an end. Strength quickly yields to Weakness, and is master'd by every Disease: for *the Days of Man* (saith David) *are but as Grass, he flourisheth as a Flower of the Field, but as soon as the Wind goeth over it, it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more*: Psal. 103. 15, 16. But the Word of our God shall stand for ever: that is, the Gospel to be reveal'd

veal'd by the Messiah hath a greater Stability, and shall endure for ever; he hath the Words of eternal Life, and tho Heaven and Earth may pass away, yet not a tittle of his Word shall fail: *And this is the Word* (saith St. Peter) *which by the Gospel is preach'd unto you,* 1 Pet. i. 25.

The Prospect or Revelation hereof to the Prophet *Isaiah*, made him thus bespeak the Jewish Nation, to whom this Gospel was to be preach'd; *O Zion, that bringest good Tidings, get thee up into the high Mountain: O Jerusalem, that bringest good Tidings, lift up thy Voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid, say unto the Cities of Judah, Behold your God.* Where by *Zion* and *Jerusalem* are meant the Church of God, which in the Old Testament is often express'd by those Names; and here the Prophet calls upon that Church and People to publish to all the World the glad Tidings of a Saviour, and to do it with the greatest Courage and Confidence, getting upon the highest Mountains, and lifting up their Voice with the greatest strength, and banishing all Doubt and Fear, to say unto the Cities of *Judah*, *Behold your God!* proclaiming his Coming as sure and certain, as if he were actually present before them, and they saw him with their own eyes.

Behold (saith he) *the Lord God will come with a strong Hand, and his Arm shall rule for him; behold, his Reward is with him, and his Work before him.* Where he represents the Messiah as coming like a King with Power and great Glory, subduing his ghostly Enemies with a strong Hand and a mighty Arm, triumphing over Principalities and Powers; that is, over Sin, Satan, the World and the Flesh, by the Power of his Grace, and conquering Death and Hell by the Power of his Resurrection.

Behold, his Reward is with him; to crown all that come to him, with Peace, Victory, and Success here, and with eternal Life and Glory hereafter. *And his Work is before him,* by his Doctrine and Miracles to confound all those that oppose his spiritual Kingdom.

Again, The Prophet represents him as coming like a Shepherd, in the last words; *He shall feed his Flock like a Shepherd:* which he did by the heavenly Food of his holy Word and Sacraments. *He shall gather the Lambs with his Arm;* which he did by causing the young Children to be brought to him, taking them in his Arms and blessing them, and saying theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. He shall carry
L 2 them

them in his Bosom, keeping them safe from Evil, and protecting them from all Harm.

And lastly, like a good Shepherd, *he shall gently lead them that are with young*; taking a tender care of teeming and fruit-bearing Christians, that they may not faint or miscarry in well-doing.

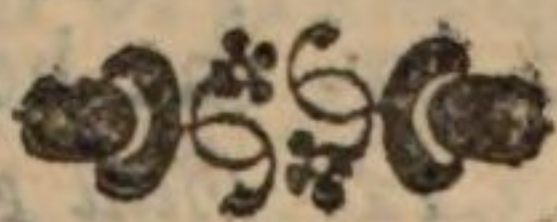
This is the Sum of the Epistle for this Day, which contains the Prophecy of *Isaias*, concerning the Manner and End of Christ's Coming, together with the Office and Employment of *St. John* the Baptist about it, who was his Harbinger to go before and prepare his way, his Herald to proclaim him, and his Usher to bring him in and shew him to the World; describ'd here by the *Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the Way of the Lord*: which he did with that success, that drew to him many Hearers from *Jerusalem, Judea*, and the Regions round about *Jordan*, where great numbers of Profelytes flock'd to him, and were baptized of him, confessing their Sins; *Mat. 3.*

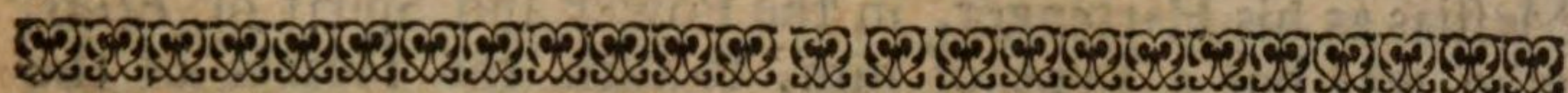
To conclude then, let us, as the Church teaches us to pray this day, endeavour to follow the Directions of his Doctrine and holy Life, that we may truly repent, according to his Preaching: and after his Example let us learn,

1. *Constantly to speak the Truth*, without fearing the Face or Frowns of any. And,

2. *Boldly to rebuke Vice*, as he did in *Herod*, and likewise in the *Scribes and Pharisees*, whom for their Pride and Hypocrisy he stiles a Generation of Vipers, willing them by Repentance to flee from the Wrath to come.

And lastly, Let us learn by his Pattern *patiently to suffer for the Truth's sake*; as he did the Cruelty of *Herod*, at the instigation of *Herodias* a vile Harlot, to whom he gave the Head of this Saint, when he knew him to be a good Man, and had heard him gladly. But of this see more in the Gospel for the fourth Sunday in *Advent*.





DISCOURSE XX.

The GOSPEL for St. John Baptist's Day.

St. Luke i. 57, to the end.

Elizabeth's full time came, that she should be deliver'd, and she brought forth a Son. And her Neighbours and her Cousins heard how the Lord had shew'd great Mercy upon her, and they rejoic'd with her : And it came to pass, that on the Eighth Day they came to circumcise the Child, &c.

ST. Luke in this Chapter, among other things, gives an Account of the wonderful Conception and Birth of St. John the Baptist, together with the many Circumstances that attended both before, in, and after it. He begins with his Parents, which were Zacharias a Priest of the Course of Abia, and Elizabeth descended from one of the Daughters of Aaron ; both righteous Persons, who walked in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless. And both childless ; the one being noted for his Age, and the other for Barrenness, and both well stricken in Years.

However, Zachary executing his Priestly Office before the Lord in the order of his Course, an Angel of the Lord appear'd unto him, standing by him on the right side of the Altar of Incense ; at the sight whereof, Zachary was much troubled, and Fear fell upon him : which the Angel perceiving, said unto him, *Fear not, Zacharias, for thy Prayer is heard, and thy Wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a Son, and thou shalt call his Name John.* Adding withal, that his Birth should be a matter of Joy and Gladness not to them only, but to many others, for many should rejoice at his Birth ; for he should be a great and eminent Person in the sight of God and Men, abstaining from Wine and Strong-drink, and should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his Mother's Womb ; and shall turn many of the Children of Israel unto the Lord their God, from whom they have

gone astray: and farther, that he should go before the Messiah as his Harbinger, in the Power and Spirit of *Elias*, who was but a Type of him, to turn the Hearts of the Fathers unto the Children, and the Disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just, to make ready a People prepar'd for the Lord.

Zachary, upon the hearing of this happy News, had not Faith enough to believe it, tho he much desir'd it; and therefore said unto the Angel, *Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old Man, and my Wife well stricken in Years.* The Angel reply'd, that he was *Gabriel*, sent from God to bring him these glad Tidings. And because he desir'd a Sign to confirm the Truth of what he had told him, he should have one, partly to punish his Unbelief, and partly to assure him of the accomplishing of his Message: for *behold*, saith the Angel, *thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be perform'd, because thou believest not my Words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.*

While these things were doing, the People waited for *Zachary's* coming forth, and wonder'd why he staid so long in the Temple. When he came out, he could not speak unto them; at which the People marvel'd, and concluded that he had seen a Vision in the Temple, for he beckon'd unto them, but remain'd speechless. And when the time of his Ministration was over, he went home to his own House; and soon after his Wife *Elizabeth* conceiv'd, which she perceiving, retir'd and hid her self for five months, partly to avoid the Discourses of the People, and partly to take time to be better assur'd of the Miracle. And finding the truth of it, she brake out in blessing and praising God, saying, *Thus graciously hath the Lord dealt with me, in the days wherein he look'd in mercy on me, to take away my Reproach among Men: Barrenness being reckon'd a heavy Curse and great Reproach among the Jews, as contradicting the great End and Design of Marriage.*

About this time the Blessed Virgin, who was also saluted by the Angel *Gabriel* with the happy News of her miraculous conceiving in her Womb the Son of God and the promis'd Messiah, made a Visit to her Cousin *Elizabeth*; being directed thereunto by the Angel for the Confirmation of her Faith, saying, *Behold thy Cousin Elizabeth hath also conceiv'd a Son in her Old Age, and this is the sixth Month with her who was call'd barren; for with God nothing shall be impossible.*

possible. At her coming to her, *Elizabeth's* Child leaped in her Womb, as it were rejoicing and doing homage to his Lord before he was born : And as *Elizabeth's* Conception was the Forerunner of that of the Virgin *Mary's*, so was the Fruit of her Womb the Forerunner to that of the Blessed Virgin's.

And this will lead me from *Elizabeth's* Conception to her Delivery, and the Nativity of her Son ; the main things to be consider'd in the Gospel for this Day, which begins thus : *Elizabeth's full time came that she should be deliver'd, and she brought forth a Son.* When the usual time of going with Child was over, she was well deliver'd of a Son. And when *her Neighbours and her Cousins* heard how the Lord had shew'd great Mercy to her, they came and rejoic'd with her. The good News of her safe Delivery, and the Birth of a Son, drew her Kindred and Friends about her, to congratulate the great Favour and Blessing vouchsafed to her ; which in this case they were more than ordinarily concern'd to do, this Birth being not only a private Favour to the Parents, but a publick Blessing to Mankind. However, it appears by this, that it was the practice of those days for Friends and Neighbours to meet and rejoice together upon such Occasions : which is what the Apostle would have all good Christians to do, to wit, to *rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep* ; Rom. 12. 15. that is, to participate of the Joys and Sorrows of one another, and to be affected with the Good or Evil that befalls our Brethren, as if it were our own. To condole with them in any Trouble or Affliction that befalls them, is to *weep with them that weep* ; and to congratulate them upon any Good or Mercy receiv'd, is to *rejoice with them that rejoice* : the Benefit whereof is, that by this means we double Joys, which by imparting grow greater, and diminish Sorrows, which by communicating grow less. So that the Custom of Neighbours and Friends coming together, and rejoicing at the Birth and Baptism of each others Children, is well enough warranted, and may be safely continu'd, provided it be done with that Modesty, Thankfulness and Moderation, that becomes so Sacred and Christian a Solemnity.

Soon after the Birth, *viz. on the eighth Day, they came to circumcise the Child, and they call'd him Zacharias, after the Name of his Father.* Circumcision was the Rite of Initiation into the Jewish, as Baptism is now into the Christian

Church : that inroll'd Childern then into God's Family, and made them Heirs of the Covenant, wherein God promis'd to be their God, and they his People. Of that Covenant, Circumcision was appointed and enjoin'd by God to *Abraham* and his Posterity, as a Sign and Seal of those Blessings, which all Nations should receive in his Seed, which was Christ, as we read *Gen. 17. 12. & Gal. 3. 16.*

This Token of the Covenant was again renew'd by *Joshua*, when the *Israelites* came into the Land of *Canaan*; being omitted for the forty Years wherein they sojourn'd in the Wilderness, as unable to endure the Hardship of that painful Ceremony : as we read, *Josh. 5. 2.*

The Time appointed for Childrens undergoing that Ceremony, was the eighth Day after the Birth, by some call'd the Number of Perfection : Seven days the Mother under the Law was reckon'd unclean, and the Child too by touching her partook something of it ; and for that reason, as also for its Weakness and Inability to endure that painful Operation, it was commanded to be done on the eighth Day, when the Mother was purify'd, and the Child circumcis'd ; for which see *Levit. 12. 2, 3.* *Buxtorf* tells us, that the Jews were so punctual and precise for that time, that if any were circumcis'd before the eighth Day, it was accounted void ; and if it were done after, it was thought but little better.

The Manner of the Operation was with a sharp Knife cutting off some part of the Foreskin of the Flesh, to which they presently apply'd some drying Medicines, and so bound up the Wound, that in few days it was perfectly heal'd. During the Action, they were wont to sing the 128th Psalm, both to quiet and to drown the crying of the Infant. The Signification hereof was, the putting off the Sins of the Flesh, by mortifying our earthly Members, minding us of laying aside all Filthiness and Superfluity of Naughtiness, and perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.

The neglecting of this Rite was threatned with a severe Punishment, no less than Excision or cutting off that Soul from his People, for breaking his Covenant, *Gen. 17. 12.* Hence we read of the Lord's meeting *Moses* in the way, and seeking to slay him for not circumcising his Child ; nor was his Anger staid till *Zipporah* took a sharp Stone and circumcis'd him, *Exod. 4. 24, 25.* *Zachary* therefore and *Elizabeth* took a religious Care of circumcising their Child on the eighth Day. At which time some of her Neighbours
and

and Cousins came, and as Godfathers and Godmothers presented it for that purpose. And because it was customary for the Sureties at the same time to give the Name, *they call'd him Zacharias after the name of his Father.* But *the Mother* (perhaps calling to mind, that the Angel who brought her the glad Tidings of his Birth, had likewise assign'd the Name of the Child) *answer'd and said, Not so, but he shall be call'd John.* To which when some of them objected, and *said, that there was none of her Kindred that was call'd by that Name;* they beckon'd and made signs to his Father, how he would have him call'd. And he ask'd for a Writing-Table, and wrote, saying his Name is John; being directed by the Angel so to call him.

But how could *Zacharias*, being yet dumb, ask for a Writing-Table, or say his Name is *John*? Why, this might be done by Signs and symbolical Representations, whereby many deaf and dumb Persons have signify'd their Mind without Speech; and his saying, *His Name is John*, was by writing down those words.

Whereupon, 'tis said, *they marvelled all*: they were all seiz'd with Wonder and Astonishment at the many strange Passages that attended this great Transaction; especially seeing *his Mouth was immediately opened, and his Tongue loos'd, and he spake and praised God.* The first Use he made of his Tongue after it was restor'd to him, was in blessing and praising God, acknowledging his Goodness in thus giving him a Child, and his Justice in thus punishing his Unbelief. Which things occasion'd great Fear and Reverence in all that dwelt round about them, for all these Sayings were noised abroad throughout all the Hill-Country of Judea. The Fame of this Birth spread far and near, and fill'd all the Country with Talk and Amazement about it: for all they that had heard these things, laid them up in their Hearts, saying, *What manner of Child shall this be?* They all concluded from these Presages, that he should be some notable Person, and that more than ordinary things should be done by him. From the extraordinary Manner of his Birth, they guess'd that the Manner of his Life and Actions would be much the same; and indeed so it was. His Conception and Nativity, which were beside the ordinary Course of Nature, were follow'd with a way of living, that was beside the common Course of human Life: for having by the good Providence of God escap'd the Malice and bloody Designs of *Herod* in his Infancy, after he was grown up he retir'd

retir'd into a Wilderness, and there led the strict and mortify'd Life of an Anchorite, free from the vicious Courses, Counsels, and Customs of the World, and abstracted from all the Baits and Allurements of bad Conversation.

His Garments were not any of that gorgeous Attire, that is to be found in King's Houses, nor the common Rayment made of Sheeps-Wool, but the Skins of Beasts, and *Camels Hair* tied about with a *Leathern Girdle*; wherein he literally answer'd the Character of *Elias*, who is describ'd to be *a hairy Man, girt with a Leathern Girdle about his Loins*; 2 Kings 1. 8.

His Diet was answerable to his Garb, for that consisted not of any of the Dainties or Varieties of a Court, nor yet of the common Food of ordinary Tables, but *Locusts and wild Honey*, the coarsest and vilest of all Food; the *Locusts* being either Grasshoppers, or, as some think, the Tops of Herbs or Plants; *the wild Honey* was such as the Bees had stored up in hollow Trees and Caverns, without any Art or Labour to prepare it: both very coarse and sylvestrian Fare. Yea, his Abstinence was so great, and his Food so different from other Men, that the Scripture saith of him, that he *came neither eating nor drinking*; as if he had taken no Food at all, or that which was good for nothing.

And as the Manner of his Life was thus extraordinary, so was his Doctrine alike strict and severe. He call'd all Men to a close View and Amendment of their Ways, as the best Preparation for the Coming of the Messiah; letting them know, that the End of his Coming was not about any earthly Concerns, as to dispose of Crowns and Scepters, or to advance his Followers to any of the Honours and Preferments of this World; but to purchase and prepare for them much better, to purify their Hearts by Faith, to guide them by his Grace here, and shortly to bring them to Glory. For those of the Jews that boasted of their Descent from *Abraham*, he wills them to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*, Mat. 3. 7. that is, such as were worthy of the Stock from which they would be thought to spring: Otherwise, it would be in vain to say, *We have Abraham to our Father*, without doing the *Works of Abraham*; for *God was able of the Stones to raise up Children to Abraham*: ver. 8.

Moreover, he tells them, that the Messiah was coming like a Husbandman with a Fan in his Hand, *thorowly to purge*

purge the Floor of his Church, gathering the good Seed of Abraham like Wheat into his Garner, and burning up the spurious Brood of Boasters like Chaff with unquenchable Fire ; ver. 12. And that he would make quick work, laying the Ax to the Root of the Tree, cutting down all that brought forth no good Fruit, and casting them into the fire ; ver. 10. And therefore he exhorted them by Repentance and Reformation of Life to flee from the Wrath to come. This was the Manner of his Doctrine, which was attended with good success ; for his free and resolute Preaching, join'd with a great Strictness and Severity of Life, gain'd him many Profelytes : for there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and the Regions round about Jordan, to be baptized of him. Persons of all Ranks and Orders, of all Sects and Opinions, Pharisees and Sadduces, Publicans and Soldiers ; all whose Vices he impartially condemn'd, and press'd upon them the Duties of their several Places and Relations.

Thus we see what manner of Child this was, as to his Person, his Life, and his Doctrine, which were all extraordinary ; for *the Hand of the Lord was with him, to bless and prosper his Undertaking.*

Upon the whole, we find our Blessed Saviour giving him the highest Character that was ever given to any Person ; saying, *Mat. II. 11. that among them that are born of Women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist ;* being honour'd with more signal Revelations, than any of the other. And tho our Saviour adds in the same place, *that he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven, is greater than he ;* because he should see the Accomplishment of that Salvation, which St. John only saw in the Figure and Prophecy : yet none ever exceeded him in the Eminence of his Sanctity, or the Dignity of his Office ; for his hallow'd Tongue first proclaim'd our Saviour to the World, and his holy Hands baptiz'd him.

This was that holy Child that was promis'd and given to Zacharias and Elizabeth in their Old Age ; and tho Zachary, for not believing the Angel's first Report, was depriv'd of Speech till the fulfilling it, yet when upon the Accomplishment of it his Speech was restor'd, he used it in praising God for the signal Mercy and Blessing bestow'd on him. For we read that *his Father Zacharias was fill'd with the Holy Ghost, and prophesy'd, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeem'd his People,*

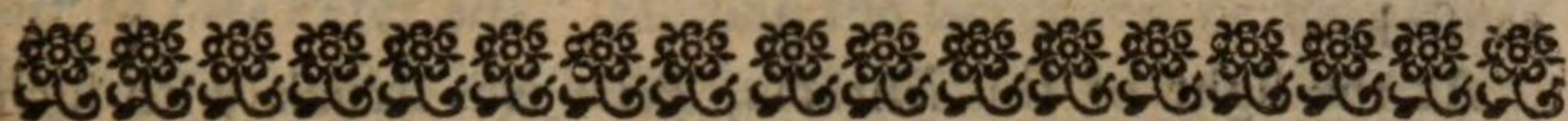
ple, &c. meaning, that *Zachary* by an especial Impulse or Motion of the Holy Spirit coming upon him, brake forth and sung the following Hymn, *Blessed be the Lord God, &c.* which Hymn, known by the Name of the *Benedictus*, being explain'd at large in the Morning-Service, after the Second Lesson, I shall refer the Reader to it.

After this, we read in the Close of this Gospel, that *the Child grew and waxed strong in Spirit, and was in the Deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel: that is, John increas'd in Stature, and had the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit multiply'd upon him, and daily more and more shewing in him; remaining in the Wilderness, till the time of his Preaching, and entering upon the Execution of his Office.*

This is a brief Account of the Gospel for this Day; which contains a short Relation of the Birth, Life, and Doctrine of that great Saint, *John the Baptist*, who was committed to Prison, and there beheaded, or rather butcher'd, by the Command of *Herod*, for his Freedom in reprov'g his Adultery and incestuous Embraces of *Herodias*, his Brother *Philip's* Wife. But of this, see more in the Gospel for the fourth Sunday in *Advent*.



D I S.



DISCOURSE XXI.

The EPISTLE for St. Peter's Day.

Acts xii. 1—12.

About that time Herod the King stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church, and he kill'd James the Brother of John with the Sword: and because he saw it pleas'd the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also, &c.

WE are this Day to consider the Life and Death of the great Apostle *St. Peter*, who was born in *Bethsaida*, a Town in *Galilee*. At his Circumcision he was named *Simon*; afterwards he was by our Saviour call'd *Cephas*, which in the *Syriack* Tongue signifies a Stone or Rock, in the *Greek* Πέτρος, from whence he was call'd *Peter*.

His Father *Jonah* was a Fisherman in *Bethsaida*, who bred up him and his Brother *Andrew* to his own Trade of fishing; which they both follow'd, till our Saviour passing by that way, call'd them from their Nets to be Followers of him: telling them that from henceforth, instead of catching of Fish, they should catch Men. To this *Peter* was encourag'd by a miraculous Draught of Fish, at a time when he neither did nor could well expect any: for our Saviour entering into his Ship, where after he had taught the People a while, he commanded him to launch out into the Deep, and to let down their Nets for a Draught; *Peter* discourag'd by the bad Success of the Night before, thought it would be but lost labour: saying to him, *Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing, nevertheless at thy word I will let down the Net*. Which being done, they immediately inclos'd such a great multitude of Fishes, that their Nets brake; and they beckon'd to their Partners, that were in another Ship, to come and help them: and

and they came and fill'd both the Ships, so that they began to sink.

At the sight of this Miracle, *Peter* was struck with such an Awe and Dread of his Divine Power, that he was not able to bear the Glory of his Presence; and therefore falling down at *Jesus's* feet, said unto him, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful Man, O Lord.* For he, and all that were with him, were astonish'd at the Draught of the Fishes they had taken. But our Lord, to rid them of their Fear, and to raise their Spirits, said unto *Simon*, *Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch Men*: meaning, that he had other and higher Work for them, and from taking of Fish he would make them Fishers of Men; and that this great Draught of Fishes which they had seen, was a Token or Emblem of those great Shoals of Converts they should bring into the Church: which we find verify'd by *St. Peter*, who by one Sermon converted three thousand Souls, *Acts* 2. 41.

But the Success of *St. Peter's* Preaching and Doctrine, will fall in more properly in considering the Gospel for this Day.

The Epistle for the Day, of which we are now to treat, leads us to the Scene of *St. Peter's* Sufferings, together with the happy End and Issue of them.

It begins with these words; *About that time Herod the King stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church.* *About that time*, that is, about the latter end of *Caligula's* Reign, in the Year 43, when *St. Peter* had visited his new-planted Churches, and return'd to *Jerusalem*; then did *Herod* the King, surnam'd *Agrippa*, who was Grandchild to *Herod* the Great, and so took his Name, having obtain'd the Kingdom, stretched forth his hands to persecute the Christians, and especially the Apostles, that were at *Jerusalem*; not so much out of Zeal to Religion, as to ingratiate himself with the Jews, who he knew mortally hated them. In that Persecution he killed *James the Brother of John with the Sword*; stil'd the Brother of *John*, and Son of *Zebedee*, to distinguish him from *James* the Son of *Alpheus*, the one being call'd *James* the Great, and the other the Less. Him for his bold reproving the Jews, and earnest contending for the Doctrine of Christ, he commanded to be apprehended and cast into Prison, where in a little time he pass'd Sentence of Death upon him, and order'd him to be beheaded.

And

And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Finding the sacrificing of this Apostle to be so grateful to them, he went on to gratify them with farther Acts of Cruelty, and proceeded to apprehend Peter also: the time whereof is likewise noted, which was at the time of the Passover, signify'd in these words, *Then were the days of unleavened Bread*; which lasted about eight Days, during which time they respited the Execution of the Sentence against St. James, out of Reverence to that great Feast.

When he had apprehended Peter, he put him in Prison also, and deliver'd him to four Quaternions of Soldiers to keep him; that is, to sixteen Soldiers to guard him, to prevent any Escape or Rescue: *intending after Easter to bring him forth to the People*; and if they desir'd it, to put him to death also. By which we see, that the best of Men are not secure from the Rage and Malice of Persecutors: so true is that of the Apostle, *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer Persecution*; and through many Tribulations we are to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Peter therefore was kept in Prison, not only guarded with Soldiers, but bound in Chains to secure his Confinement. But Prayer was made without ceasing, of the Church, unto God for him. The good Christians of those times were instant and importunate with God in Prayer for the Life and Safety of this great Apostle. By this Example we are taught to make frequent and earnest Intercessions with God, for the Deliverance of Christ's persecuted Saints and Members, that are in any Durance or Distress. This the Sympathy that is or ought to be between the Members of Christ's mystical Body obliges them all to do, to look upon and commiserate each other's Condition as their own, and to beg Relief and Assistance of God accordingly. Remember them that are in Bonds (saith the Apostle) as bound with them; and them which suffer Adversity, as being your selves also in the Body: Heb. 13. 3. Hence our Church teaches us to pray for all Prisoners and Captives, as the Christians here did for St. Peter under his sore Imprisonment.

But what was the Issue of the Church's Prayers in the behalf of St. Peter? Why, the Night before his intended Execution, God sent an Angel from Heaven to release him out of Prison, and thereby prevented their wicked Purpose

pose against him: the Manner whereof, the following Words declare.

When Herod would have brought him forth to the People, the same night Peter was sleeping between two Soldiers, bound with two Chains, and the Keepers before the door kept the Prison. Peter was found fast asleep, when the Angel came to release him: a good Conscience can give Rest in the midst of Enemies and the greatest Dangers, for God is their Keeper, who watches over them, and giveth his Beloved Sleep. A good Man (saith Solomon) is satisfy'd from himself: His Mind is at quiet, and no Chains or Imprisonment can disturb his Rest. While Peter was thus taking his Rest in the midst of Soldiers and Keepers, Behold, the Angel of the Lord came unto him, and a Light shined in the Prison, which dispel'd the Darkness of the Dungeon; and he smote Peter on the side, not to annoy, but to awake him and raise him up, saying to him, Arise up quickly: which he accordingly did, and the Chains immediately fell off his hands of their own accord.

And the Angel farther said unto him, *Gird thy self and bind on thy Sandals, cast thy Garments about thee, and follow me: that is, make thy self ready to go immediately out of this place, put on thy Garments and Shoes, and be prepar'd to follow me. Which things Peter did, as the Angel order'd him: And when all things were ready, the Angel by an Act of the Divine Power open'd the Prison-door, and went out, and Peter follow'd him. But Peter all this while being in a kind of Trance, took not this for a thing really done, but for a Dream or Phantasm; for he wist not that it was true, which was done by the Angel, but thought he saw a Vision. However, when they had pass'd the first and second Ward, which were in the Suburbs, they came unto the Iron-Gate, that leadeth into the City; and that open'd to them of its own accord. And now being out of Prison, and enter'd within the City, the Angel pass'd on through one Street with him, and then departed from him, leaving him to enjoy and improve his Liberty.*

By this time Peter came to himself, and perceiv'd that it was no Vision, but a Reality, that had happen'd unto him: for now I know of a surety (saith he) that the Lord hath sent his Angel, and hath deliver'd me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the Expectation of the People of the Jews; who both desir'd and design'd to put him to death:

death. Such wonderful care doth God Almighty take, to preserve and protect those whom he employs in his Service.

But tho the Epistle for the Day ends here, yet because the Story here related continues farther, I shall briefly pursue it to the end of the Chapter.

Peter, we see, by the miraculous Counsel and Conduct of an Angel is got safe out of Prison; and having gain'd his Liberty, he went to the House of *Mary*, the Mother of *John*, whose Surname was *Mark*, where many were gather'd together, praying for him. Whilst they were performing that Office for him, *Peter* came and knock'd at the Door of the Gate; where a Damsel named *Rhoda*, who knew *Peter's* Voice, ran to the Door, and hearken- ing, and perceiving that it was he, went in immediately without opening the Door, and told them the joyful News that *Peter* was at the Door, standing before the Gate. They within thinking him to be in Prison, and knowing nothing of his Release, believ'd her not, and said unto her, *Thou art mad*; taking it for an Effect either of Love, or Fear, or Phrenzy. But she persisting in it, and constantly affirming it was he, they concluded it might be some Messenger sent from him, with some Tidings to the Church. But *Peter* continued knocking till they came forth; and when they had open'd the Door, they saw him, and were astonish'd. *Peter* finding them transported with Joy at the sight of him, and very forward to publish it, beckon'd to them with his hand to hold their peace, lest he should be discover'd, and remanded back to Prison. And therefore he first briefly related to them the Manner of his Deliverance, how God had sent an Angel to him, to open the Prison-Doors, and to lead him out from thence. And next, he bids them go and shew these things unto *James* the Bishop of *Jerusalem*, and to the Brethren and Christians that were there: and then he departed from thence, and went into another place of greater safety.

These things were transacted the Night before *St. Peter* was to be executed; for had he continu'd in Prison, he was the next Morning to be brought forth unto the People, and to please them, to be sent the same way as *St. James* was a little before. But God releas'd him from their Rage, and prevented their intended Murder.

But the Apostle's Escape occasion'd a very great Uproar and Bustle among the Keepers: for *as soon as it was day there was no small stir among the Soldiers, what was become of Peter.* The Loss of the Prisoner put them all at a great loss about it, insomuch that *when Herod sought for him and found him not, he examin'd the Keepers, and commanded them to be put to death.* Their Lives were taken away instead of his; for the Prisoner was saved by the Hand of God, and the Keepers executed by the Hand of Herod.

And he too, for assuming to himself the Glory that was due to God only, came likewise to an untimely End, and was eaten up of Worms.

What became of *St. Peter* for some time after his Deliverance out of Prison, is not certainly known: 'tis probably thought he was not idle, but went about preaching the Gospel in sundry parts of *Judea*, and other places. However, we have no certain Account of him till his coming to *Jerusalem*, where we find him in the Great Council of the Apostles, assembled there about the Jewish Converts, *Acts 15.* *St. Peter* pleading there for their Exemption from Circumcision and other Rites of *Moses's* Law, and for laying no unnecessary Burdens upon them: which after occasion'd no small Contests among them.

Among the other Peregrinations of *St. Peter* for the propagating of the Christian Faith, we read that he came into *Britain*, and was a great Instrument of planting the Gospel in these Islands, by which means we happily enjoy the Light of it to this day. But wherever it was that this Apostle employ'd his Time and Ministry, certain it is, that about the latter end of *Nero's* Reign he came to *Rome*, where he found the Minds of the People strangely bewitch'd and harden'd against the Christian Religion by the Subtlety and Sorceries of *Simon Magus*, who by his magical Arts and Enchantments was greatly admir'd and almost ador'd among them. Him *St. Peter* had baffled before at *Samaria*, and here he encounters him again at *Rome*, to elude the Force of his Charms, and destroy the Efficacy of his Delusions: for which a fair Opportunity then offer'd it self; for a Kinsman of the Emperor's being lately dead, *Peter* who was famous for raising the Dead, was sent for to bring him to Life again. At the same time the Admirers of *Simon Magus* caus'd him to be call'd for, for the same purpose; it being agreed between them, that he

he who could do the Feat, should be well rewarded, and the other punish'd for an Impostor.

Accordingly *Simon Magus* first began with his Magical Arts and Enchantments; at which, the deceas'd Person seem'd to move the Hand: upon the sight whereof, some that stood by cry'd out that he was alive, and were ready to fall foul on *Peter* for opposing such a Divine Power.

But *Peter* desir'd their Patience, till he discover'd the Imposture; telling them, that if *Simon* were taken from the Bed-side, all Appearance of Life would soon vanish: And being accordingly remov'd, the Body remain'd dead and destitute of all manner or sign of Motion. Whereupon *Peter* standing at a good distance from the Bed, first lifted up his Eyes to Heaven, and then before them all commanded the dead Body in the name of Jesus to arise; which it presently did, speaking and walking about. Upon which the People chang'd their Opinion, and would have stoned the Magician to death, had not *Peter* interceded for his Life.

But he, to regain the Favour and Opinion of the People, promis'd that at such a time they should see him fly up into Heaven. Accordingly at the time appointed he mounted the Capitol, and thence began his Flight: But the artificial Wings he had made for that purpose failing him, he fell to the ground, and so bruised himself, that he soon after died.

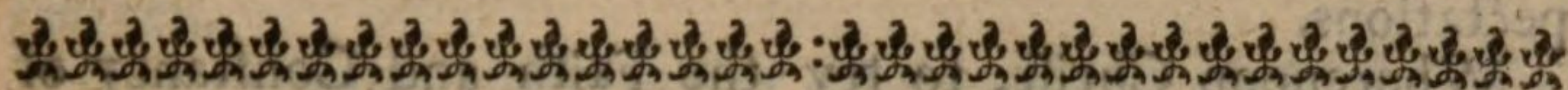
This is said to be the End of that wretched and unhappy Man, whom *St. Peter* did not long survive: for about that time *Nero*, out of his implacable Enmity to the Christian Religion, and mortal Hatred of the Apostles that preach'd it, commanded *Peter* and *Paul*, who were then both at *Rome*, to be committed to Prison, in order to his exercising farther Cruelties upon them. In this sad Juncture, the Christians in *Rome* offer'd up their daily Prayers and Intercessions for them; withal soliciting *Peter* to make his Escape, and to reserve himself for the farther Use and Services of the Church. But while he was meditating on these things, he was either by a secret Impulse of his own Mind, or as some say by a Vision or Meeting of our Saviour, warn'd not to shrink from any Sufferings in his Cause. Whereupon he cheerfully acquiesced in the Will of God, and readily submitted to be crucify'd: only he begg'd the Favour of the Officers, that

he might not undergo it the ordinary way, but might suffer with his Head downward, and his Feet upward towards Heaven; affirming, that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture, wherein his Lord had suffer'd before him.

Thus we see something of the Life and Death of this great Apostle; by whose Example we are taught the great Lessons of Patience and Perseverance in the Work of the Lord unto the End, not declining any Sufferings in his Cause and at his Call: knowing, that if we suffer with or for him, we shall also be glorify'd together; and by being faithful unto Death, we shall e'er long receive a Crown of Life: which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, &c.



DIS-



DISCOURSE XXII.

The GOSPEL for St. Peter's Day.

St. Matthew xvi. 13—20.

When Jesus came into the Coasts of Cefarea Philippi, he asked his Disciples, saying, Whom do Men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets, &c.

THE Epistle for this Day gave us some Account of the Sufferings of St. Peter, and particularly of his Imprisonment by *Herod*, together with his Deliverance from it.

The Gospel for the Day acquaints us with his Doctrine, and particularly with the famous Confession of his Faith in Christ, together with the Stability of the Christian Church founded upon it.

The Account hereof begins with the Place where our Saviour met his Disciples, after he had sent them abroad to publish him to the World, to let them know that the promis'd Messiah was come, and that he himself was the Person foretold and so long expected by them. The Place of meeting them, was in the Coasts of *Cefarea Philippi*; where he enquires into the Success of their Message, asking them, and saying, *Whom do Men say that I the Son of Man am?* They reply'd, that the World were divided in their Opinions about him: for some took him for *John the Baptist*, who, tho put to death by *Herod*, was yet suppos'd by many to be risen again from the dead. Others took him for *Elias*, that old Prophet that was translated up into Heaven, and at that time expected to come back again. Others again took him for *Jeremias*, whom they thought to be alive again; or one of the antient Pro-

phets, of whose Return the Jews had some earnest Expectations.

Whereupon Christ, to try the Faith and Constancy of his Disciples, lest they should be stagger'd by such a Variety of Opinions, puts the same Question to them; *But whom say ye that I am?* Peter the first and chiefest of the Apostles, call'd therefore *the Mouth of the Apostles*, answer'd and said in the name of the rest, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Our Saviour was so well pleas'd with his Answer, that he immediately pronounc'd him blessed; saying, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonah!* And then highly approv'd and commended his Confession; for *Flesh and Blood* (saith he) *hath not reveal'd this unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven:* meaning, that this Faith which thou hast now made Confession of, is not built upon any human Wit or Contrivance, nor to be learnt by any human Means or Testimonies, but is altogether Divine, and can be attain'd only by the solemn Attestations and Revelations from Heaven. And because thou hast so freely confess'd me before Men, *I also will confess thee before my Father which is in Heaven.* And therefore *I also say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.* These words have an Elegance in the Original by the Affinity of the word Πέτρος, the Name of Peter, and Πέτρα, which signifies a Rock: *Σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ Πέτρῃ οἰκοδομήσω τὴν ἐκκλησίαν:* which Elegance or Paronomasy is lost in the Translation, the English Words not having the same Affinity either in Sound or Syllables. However they are rightly enough render'd, *Thou art Peter,* which signifies a Stone or a Rock; and as thy Name is, so shalt thou be, for *upon this Rock I will build my Church:* meaning, that he should be a principal Part or Stone in the building of it, which he would build so firmly, that *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.* Beside which, *I will give unto thee* (saith our Saviour) *the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.* This is commonly stiled, *The Power of the Keys;* which implies a spiritual Authority of opening and shutting the Doors of the Church, excluding obstinate and impenitent Offenders, and admitting penitent and returning Sinners, express'd here by Binding and Loosing; and what is thus regularly done

done here on Earth, will be ratify'd and confirm'd in Heaven.

Now though these things tend much to exalt the Honour of *St. Peter*, to whom our Saviour here address'd his Speech; and who being first call'd to the Apostleship, may be well enough allow'd a Primacy of Order and Dignity above the rest: yet we may not think any thing herein to be personal or peculiar to him, beside or above the other Apostles. For *St. Peter* herein was only the Spokesman or Mouth of the rest, who all assented to it, and were as ready to make the same Confession: yea, we find some were before and fuller in it than he; for *Nathaniel* at his first coming to Christ said unto him, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel*; *John* 1. 49. And tho *St. Peter* be here stiled a Rock, yet the rest are in other places call'd the Foundation and Pillars of the Christian Church, *Gal.* 2. 9. And *Rev.* 21. 14. the twelve Apostles are stiled the twelve Foundations, upon which the Walls of the New Jerusalem stand. Neither was the Power of the Keys committed to *St. Peter* only, but to him jointly and equally with all the rest, as may be seen, *Mat.* 18. 18. & *John* 20. 21, 23.

But the main thing here intended by our Saviour, is to set forth the Strength and Stability of his Church, which he hath built so firmly upon a Rock, that no earthly or infernal Powers shall undermine or overturn it; *The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*. Where by the Church we understand not the material Temple, or Place of Divine Worship, which is in Scripture often call'd the Church; nor by building it is meant the laying together of Stones and other Materials, necessary to the raising of such a Structure, which is the common Notion of Building. But by the Church here is meant, the Sacred Society of Christian People, call'd out of the World to be united to Christ as the Head, and to one another as Members.

This *St. Peter* stiles a Chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a Peculiar People, shewing forth the Praises of him, who hath call'd them out of Darkness into his marvellous Light; *1 Pet.* 2. 9. By the building of this Church, is meant the settling or establishing such a Sacred Society, for the Honour of Christ, and the Salvation of his People.

This is the Church, whose indefectible Duration is here so plainly asserted ; the Strength and Stability whereof is here confirm'd by three good Arguments.

The 1st is taken from the Greatness of the Founder or Builder of it, which is Christ himself, God blessed for ever ; in those words, *I will build my Church.*

The 2^d is taken from the Firmness of the Foundation, which is upon a Rock ; *Upon this Rock I will build my Church.*

The 3^d is taken from a Promise of its Preservation from all Enemies and Opposers whatever ; *For the Gates of Hell (saith he) shall not prevail against it.* I shall speak something to each of these, the better to build us up in this most holy Faith. And,

1st, The Strength and Stability of the Church may be prov'd from the Greatness of the Founder and Builder of it, who is Christ himself ; *I will build my Church.* The Continuance as well as the Contrivance of any Building depends much upon the Wisdom of the Architect : he that hath Strength and Skill commonly builds firm ; and consequently God, who hath all power in Heaven and Earth, can give Solidity and Permanence to the Works of his Hand. Indeed no human Art or Strength can build a House that shall last for ever ; such a Work exceeds the Power of all finite and natural Agents ; but an infinite Power and Wisdom can build for Eternity, and as easily support his Church for ever, as for one moment. All earthly Tabernacles must and will be dissolv'd, for they consist of such mouldring Materials, as naturally incline to Dissolution and Decay ; but the Apostle tells us of a *Building of God, a House not made with Hands, but eternal in the Heavens ;* 2 Cor. 5. 1. Such a Structure as this is the Church of Christ, which he hath order'd and establish'd for ever, call'd therefore *the City of the living God,* and such a *City as hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.* Hence we find the Apostle arguing from God's Power and Goodness, to the Firmness and Stability of his Church, and every Member of it, *Who shall be holden up (saith he) for God is able to make them stand ;* Rom. 14. 4.

This sacred Society was erected for the Honour of our Saviour, and will therefore be continu'd for a lasting Monument of his Praise and Glory. The Faith profess'd in it, is said to be an incorruptible Seed ; the Love that cements it is everlasting, and never fails ; the Business perform'd in it, which is blessing and praising of God, will have

have no end ; it begins here on Earth, and will be continu'd and compleated in Heaven. 'Tis Christ then that builds the Church, which being design'd for his own House or Mansion, he will make it firm, and give it a Permanence co-eval with himself ; having stil'd it his own Body, he will keep it from Decay, and not suffer his Holy One to see Corruption.

And, The Strength and Stability of the Church is here farther prov'd from the Firmness of the Foundation upon which it stands, being founded on a Rock ; *Upon this Rock I will build my Church.* A House built on a Rock is secure from the greatest Concussions of Wind and Weather ; for *the Rains may descend, the Floods come, and the Winds blow and beat upon that House, and it will not fall, because 'tis founded on a Rock.* Mat. 7. 25.

Such a Foundation hath the Church of Christ, which is not built upon the Sand of Error and Falshood, which would make it liable to sinking, and fall with every Tempest ; but on a Rock of Truth and Righteousness, that is solid and unmovable, and able to endure the roughest Storm.

But what is that Rock upon which Christ is here said to build his Church ? Why, the Church of Rome would have it to be St. Peter ; and Bellarmine labours hard to build the Pope's Supremacy and Infallibility upon this Rock, as St. Peter's Successor. But neither the words of Christ in this Place, nor in any other part of Holy Scripture, give the least Favour or Countenance to such an Interpretation : for our Saviour does not say, thou art Peter, and upon thee Peter I will build my Church, which he would have said, if he had meant it of the Person of St. Peter ; but the word is vary'd, *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my Church* : which shews, that he meant something different and distinct from St. Peter's Person ; namely, the Faith and Profession he had just before made, and so 'tis generally understood and expounded by the antient Fathers.

Neither doth St. Paul's Saying, *The Church is built upon the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles,* Eph. 2. 20. make any more for St. Peter, than any other of the Apostles, who are all equally stil'd Pillars and Foundations of the Christian Church.

Beside, tho St. Peter was an eminent Instrument in the beginning and building of the Church ; yet he had those personal

personal Failings, that must have endanger'd the whole Fa-brick, if it had no better Foundation : for he who so freely confess'd Christ, did after as foully deny him ; and the Church must have long since fail'd and perish'd with him, if it had been built on his Person, there being nothing of his Successor imply'd or express'd.

Briefly then, 'tis not the Person, but the Faith and Confession of *St. Peter*, that is here, for the Soundness and Solidity of it, metaphorically stil'd a Rock ; being the great fundamental Truth of the Christian Religion, and that upon which all the Hopes and Expectations of Christians are founded. So that, to speak properly, Jesus Christ, or a Belief in him as the Son of God, is in Scripture made the sole Foundation of the Christian Church. This was promis'd and foretold of him in the Old Testament : *Behold (saith God) I lay in Sion, for a Foundation, a try'd Stone, a precious Corner-Stone, a sure Foundation ;* Isa. 28. 16. which in the New Testament is apply'd to Christ, as fulfill'd in him ; for he is said to be *the chief Corner-Stone elect and precious, in whom all the Building, fitly fram'd together, groweth into an holy Temple unto the Lord : and other Foundation can no Man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ : I Cor. 3. 11.* Which shews the Strength and Stability of the Church, Jesus Christ being both the Founder and Foundation of it, call'd therefore *the Rock of our Salvation*, and *the Rock of Ages* ; to signify, that he hath built his Church on a Rock, which will stand and preserve it thro all Ages. And this will lead to the

Last Argument in the Text, taken from God's Promise of its Preservation, in those words, *The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it : where, by the Gates of Hell*, we may understand either the Power of Death and the Grave, or the Power of the Devil and his Instruments ; neither of which singly, nor the combin'd Forces of both together, shall ever be able to destroy or undermine the Church : for God promis'd, in the Old Testament, to keep his Vineyard from the Incursions of the wild Boar of the Forest that would destroy it, and from the Subtlety of the little Foxes that would undermine it, and that no Weapon of Power or Policy form'd against it should prosper.

In the New Testament Christ promises to *be with his Church to the end of the World ;* Mat. 28. 20. and the Apostle tells us, *He will never leave it nor forsake it,* Heb. 13. 5. Now he is faithful that hath promis'd, and hath in all
Ages

Ages made it good by the many signal Deliverances of his Church in times of greatest Dangers and Persecutions. Indeed if we consider the near and dear Relation that Christ bears to his Church, which he calls his Body, his Spouse, his dearly Beloved, we may be well assur'd he will not let it fall ; yea, if we consider the Price he gave for it, having purchas'd it with his own most precious Blood, we may well think he will not easily lose or part with what cost him so dear. To which if we add the Covenant that God hath enter'd into with his Church, of his being their God, and they his People, we may safely conclude he will stand by it, and keep it from Ruin.

Thus we see something of the Strength and Stability of the Christian Church, from the Greatness of the Founder, the Firmness of the Foundation, and the ample Security which the Promise and Providence of God have given to it. To which if we add, how much the Honour and Glory of God is concern'd in the Preservation of his Church, we may safely depend upon it, *that the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against it.* To conclude then this Discourse, we may learn from it the following Lessons:

1. From the high Commendation here given of St. Peter's Faith and Confession, let us learn firmly to adhere to it, and to be ever ready to make the like Profession of it, as occasion shall require. Our Saviour hath told us, that *if we confess him before Men, he will own and confess us before his Father in Heaven*; but if we deny him or his Truths here, he will for ever deny and disown us hereafter, which should make us beware of ever shrinking or revolting from him.

2. From the Firmness and Stability of the Church, we may learn the great Folly and Danger of plotting or conspiring against it : for God Almighty having taken the Church into his Care and Protection, to attempt against it, is to be found Fighters against God, which none ever did and prosper'd. The Psalmist represents all the Enemies and Contrivers against the Church, as Persons that only *imagine a vain thing, and form mischievous Devices, which they are not able to perform*; shewing the Almighty sitting in the Heavens, and laughing them to scorn, and having their goodliest Projects in derision ; Psal. 2. & Psal. 21. for *there is no Enchantment against Jacob, nor any Divination against Israel* :

Israel : And if the Powers of Hell cannot prevail, we need not fear what any earthly Powers can do against us.

3. This Discourse may serve to comfort all the Mourners in *Sion*, against those that bear an evil Will to it : for tho the Walls may be shaken, yet *the Foundation of it standeth sure, the Lord knoweth who are his.* God may sometimes use the Wicked as a Rod to correct his People, but he will not take away his Loving-Kindness from them, nor suffer his Truth to fail ; he hath undertaken their Defence, and none shall pluck them out of his Hands. Wherefore,

Lastly, Let us commit the Care of the Church to him that careth for it, and rely upon the Divine Providence for its Security and Protection in the greatest Extremities ; not betaking our selves to any wrong means for our Safety, but committing our selves unto God in well-doing, which will be our greatest Safety. In a word, let us continue stedfast in the Faith of Christ, and as immovable as the Rock upon which it is founded, and then our Labour will not be in vain in the Lord.



DISCOURSE XXIII.

St. James the Apostle's Day.

St. Mat. xvi. 24.

Then said Jesus to his Disciples, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me.

THE Saint we commemorate this Day, is St. James the Apostle, the Son of *Alphaeus*, call'd *James the Less*, to distinguish him from *James the Son of Zebedee*, surnam'd, *The Great*.

The Collect for the Day minds us of this Holy Apostle's leaving his Father, and all that he had, and his being, without delay, obedient to the Call of Jesus Christ, by following him; and from thence teaches us to pray, that we, forsaking all worldly and carnal Affections, may be evermore ready to follow his Holy Commandments, thro Jesus Christ our Lord.

By this Example we are taught the great Lesson of Self-denial, and bearing the Cross, of which I shall therefore treat at this time, from these words of our Saviour, *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, &c.* Where we have,

First, A Privilege to be desir'd and aspir'd to, *If any will come after me*; that is, if any will be my Disciple.

Secondly, Three great Duties or Qualifications annex'd to it; and they are, (1.) *Let him deny himself.* (2.) *Let him take up his Cross.* And, (3.) *Let him follow me.* Of each of which something particularly. And,

First, Of the great Privilege here mention'd and offer'd by our Saviour, *If any will come after me*; that is, if they will be my Disciples. Masters, we know, are wont to go before the Scholars, and Disciples use to follow and come after them. Now Christ represents himself here under the Notion of a Master, leading and teaching his Scholars,

lars, his Disciples following and coming after him for Instruction. And this is a high Honour and Privilege, to be instructed by *a Teacher come from God*; one that spake as never Man spake, and did the Works that never Man did: for hereby we may be secur'd from Error, or learning any thing that is amiss, and be sure of hearing the most useful and the most excellent Instructions. We may very well believe what he affirms, trust to what he promises, and obey whatsoever he commands, receiving all our Lessons from this Divine Teacher, not as the Words of Man, but, as indeed they are, the Words of God.

And as 'tis a great Honour to have such a Master, so is it a great Happiness to learn of him, and to become good Proficients in his School; for that will show us to be his true Disciples, and make us in a great measure like unto him: which is propounded here as a very desirable Privilege, and a thing of which we ought to be highly ambitious. *If any will come after me*; that is, if any will be Christians indeed, not only titular or nominal, but real Christians; not like *Agrippa*, almost, but altogether Christians, which we should all aspire to; if we would willingly be what we profess, the true Disciples of Christ, and so come after him here, that we may come to him hereafter; in a word, if we will answer the noble Title of a Christian, and receive the Reward of Christianity, all which are great invaluable Privileges: What then? why, our Saviour here directs us what to do to attain unto them; and that is, *to deny our selves, to take up the Cross, and to follow him.*

These are the three great Lessons requir'd of all his Disciples. The

1st, Whereof is Self-denial, *Let him deny himself.* This is not only the first, but the hardest Lesson in Christ's School; which if we get over and learn well, we shall soon make a good Progress in Christianity, and our profiting will appear to all Men; but if we fail or falter in this first Step, we stumble at the Threshold, and shall be able to go no further.

But what is it to *deny our selves*? for this seems a strange as well as difficult Lesson: Can any thing be nearer or dearer to us than our selves? Hath not God planted in every Man a Love of himself, and a care of his own Concerns and Preservation, and made that the measure of his

Love and Carriage towards others? How then are we commanded to renounce this natural Principle of our Being, and not only to fall out with, but even to deny our very selves?

In answer to this, we must note, that *God made Man upright, but he hath sought out many Inventions*; Eccl. 7. 29. We came out of God's Hands perfect, sound, and pure in all our Faculties, having the Image of our Maker stamp'd upon us, which consisted in *Knowledg, Righteousness, and true Holiness*: But we have since corrupted our Natures, deprav'd our Faculties, and perverted our Ways, *every Imagination of the Thoughts of the Heart being only evil continually*. By which means we have contracted many vicious Habits and Inclinations, preferring our own Fancies, Wills, Desires, and Interests before the Will of God, and the Commands of Christ.

Now to deny our selves, is to renounce all such corrupt Habits and Inclinations; not to gratify our selves in any thing, how near and dear soever it may be to us, that stands in opposition against, or comes in competition with our Duty to God or our Saviour. But to speak more particularly, to be Christ's Disciples, we must,

1. Deny our natural selves, that is, our Reason, Will, and Affections, when they oppose the reveal'd Truths and Will of God. As for our Reason, we must stoop that to Faith in Matters of Divine Revelation, not suffering it to be too curious in prying into them, but to believe them upon the Word and Testimony of God, who is Truth it self. The Mysteries of Religion are too sublime for our weak Capacities to comprehend; the Doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Resurrection of the Dead, have Depths unfathomable by our shallow Reason, and therefore may not be measur'd or scann'd by it: *The natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discern'd*; 1 Cor. 2. 14. Our Reason is non-pluss'd about the most common and obvious things in nature, and therefore must not pretend to judg of higher and spiritual Matters; and yet vain Man would be wise above that which is written, and reject the Mysteries of the Gospel, because he cannot fully understand or comprehend them; which is to set up a Candle above the Sun, and to *chuse Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil*. And therefore we must not rely upon, but
renounce

renounce our own Judgment in things that are so far above it, and deny our Reason, when it interposes and interferes with Divine Revelation; believing not what our Reason, but God's Word tells us, looking upon it as the greatest reason to believe it, because God hath said it.

Then for our Wills; tho they were once right, and agreeable with the Divine Will, yet now they are become crooked and contrary to the Will of God, refusing the Good, and chusing Evil: and therefore we must deny these too, saying in all things as our Saviour did about the bitter Cup, *Not my Will, but thine be done*. If Christ deny'd his own most pure and perfect Will, that his Father's Will might be accomplish'd, how much more ought we to deny our own perverse Wills, that are so averse to all Good, and prone to all Evil, that they may be made conformable to the perfect Will of God? If we do otherwise, instead of coming after Christ, we run away from him, and move and act quite contrary to him, which is rather to be a Foe than Follower of him; and therefore to keep us to it, he hath taught us every day to say, *Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*.

Lastly, For our Affections, these too are become very disorderly and irregular, plac'd upon wrong Objects, and running into undue Measures; loving what we should hate, and hating what we should love; desiring what we should detest, and detesting what we should desire: and therefore these too are to be renounc'd or rectify'd, denying them all unlawful, and fixing them upon proper Objects; yea, and denying our selves the use even of lawful things, when they are apt to run into Inordinacy and Excess. This is to deny our natural selves, by restraining our Reason in the Mysteries of Religion, by regulating our Wills according to the Will of God, and rectifying our Affections from all Extravagance and Disorder.

2. To be Christ's Disciples, we must deny our sinful and sensual selves. This the Apostle expresses, by *denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*; Tit. 2. 12. A true Christian must not indulge or allow himself in any known Sin, but must mortify and abandon all; not only those to which he may have some Aversion, but likewise those to which he may be most inclin'd. If we observe it, we shall find every Man ordinarily hath some darling or beloved Vice. David calls it *his own Sin*; and the Apostle, *the Sin that doth easily beset us*: a Sin which a Man's Thoughts run most upon,
and

and his Desires are most eagerly carry'd out unto, which he takes most Pleasure in, and is most of all loth to part with.

Now this Sin, whatever it may be, either Pride or Covetousness, Malice or Uncleanness, Luxury or Drunkenness, or whatever else it is, must be totally renounc'd and relinquish'd by us, if we mean to be Christ's Disciples; otherwise he will never own us for his, if we allow or indulge our selves in any known Sin, for 'tis that Sin, and not Christ, that is Master: and therefore we must part with that or our Saviour, for we cannot serve two Masters, but must either deny our selves or him.

3. To be Christ's Disciples, we must deny our worldly selves; that is, all earthly Possessions, Relations, and even Life it self, at his Call, and in his Cause. We must be ready to quit all the Profits and Pleasures of this World, when they interfere with the Love, or come into competition with the Glory of God; for *if any so love the World, as rather to leave Christ than his Estate, the Love of the Father is not in him*; 1 John 2. 15. Yea, we must forsake Father and Mother, Wife and Children, Brethren and Sisters, and all the nearest and dearest things in the World, and undergo the greatest Hardships that any can put upon us, rather than forsake Christ, or do any thing that is offensive to him: for *he that loveth Father or Mother, or any other Relation, more than me* (saith our Saviour) *is not worthy of me*; and *he that forsaketh not all that he hath, and hateth not his own Life, for my sake, cannot be my Disciple*: Luke 14. 26, 27. These may seem hard Sayings, but they are grounded upon good Reason, and attended with a great Reward; for he is not worthy to be Christ's Disciple, that doth not prefer him above all other things; and he that parts with any thing for his sake, shall receive more than a thousand fold.

4. To be Christ's Disciples, we must deny our righteous selves; that is, we must renounce all Righteousness of our own, and desire to be found only in Christ's Righteousness. Our own Righteousness is attended with many Failings and Imperfections, yea such as will rather condemn than justify us before God. The Prophet *Isaiah* stiles our best Righteousness but *filthy Rags, and menstruous Cloth*; and when we have done our utmost, our Saviour bids us to say, that we are but *unprofitable Servants*. Our holiest Performances are mingled and polluted with Sin, and are more apt to beget

Abhorrence, than find Acceptance with God ; for which reason we are rather to renounce, than rely upon them. This is a great Piece of Self-denial ; for Men are naturally so in love with themselves and their own Righteousness, that they cannot hear of denying or disclaiming of either : they would fain be self-sufficient, and not beholden to another for their Justification. 'Twas the Pride of the *Pharisees* to aim at Justification by the Merit of their own Works, and they scorn'd to hear of such a borrow'd and beggarly Felicity, that came, like an Alms, from the Bounty of Heaven. These, as the Apostle tells us, *being ignorant of Christ's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own, submitted not themselves to the Righteousness of God ;* Rom. 10. 3. Whereas the Apostle desir'd to be found, *not having his own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is thro the Faith of Christ, even the Righteousness of God by Faith :* Phil. 3. 8, 9. In like manner, tho we are to be careful to do good Works, and to labour after Righteousness to the utmost of our power ; yet when we have done all, we must renounce all Worth in them, and rely entirely upon the Merits of Christ for our Justification. Thus we see the first Lesson to be learnt of all Christ's Disciples, and that is, to *deny themselves*. The

Second is, *To take up the Cross ;* where by the Cross is meant all the Troubles, Afflictions, and Sufferings we may meet with in adhering to Christ and his Cause, which we must bear without repining or sinking under them. The way to Heaven is not strew'd with Roses, that yield nothing but Sweetness and Satisfaction ; but set with Thorns, that pierce us thro with many Sorrows : *In the World ye shall have Tribulation,* saith our Saviour, *John* 16. 33. As we are Men, we shall find many Crosses in this World ; and as Christians, we must look for many more : *The World will love its own ; but because ye are chosen out of the World, therefore the World hates you.* So that here we must not think of a Paradise of Pleasure, but a Place of Pains and Sufferings ; nor may we expect to be carry'd up to Heaven in fiery Chariots, but in fiery Trials ; for *thro many Tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God ;* Acts 14. 22. So that the Sufferings of this Life, both inward and outward, in Body, Goods, or Name, are the Cross, that we are commanded to take up.

But what is it to take up the Cross ? Why, not to draw any unnecessary Trouble upon us, or wilfully to run our
selves

selves into danger : for we are bid to be *wise as Serpents, as well as harmless as Doves*; and if we are persecuted in one City, to flee to another. But the Sense is, to decline no necessary Duty to God or Man, for fear of any danger it may expose us to; but rather to be willing and ready to undergo the greatest Sufferings, than to commit the least Sin, and to run any Hazards rather than omit the smallest Duty. If any Cross lie in the strait way that leads to Life, we are not to leave the narrow Path, nor break any Enclosures to avoid it, but must patiently take it up and carry it along with us: if (as one hath observ'd) it be a little heavy at first, it will soon grow lighter, and rather promote than hinder our Progress toward Heaven.

But here we must not think every Trouble we meet with in this World to be the Cross of Christ: for some justly suffer for their Sins and wilful Breaches of the Laws of God and Man, others suffer for a Humour, Fancy, or mistaken Opinion; and where 'tis so, 'tis their own Cross, and not the Cross of Christ that lights upon them: *For what Glory is it (saith St. Peter) if when ye are buffeted for your Faults, ye take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God: For hereunto were ye call'd, because Christ also suffer'd for us, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps.* 1 Pet. 2. 19, 20. We may not court the Cross, or draw upon us unnecessary Sufferings; for Christ himself pray'd, that the bitter Cup might pass from him: but we must with him submit to the Divine Will, and endure any thing rather than sin against God, or wound our own Conscience; *For this is thank-worthy (saith the Apostle) if a Man, for Conscience towards God, endure Grief, suffering wrongfully.*

This is the Cross that St. Paul glory'd in, and the rest of the Apostles rejoic'd that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ. 'Tis the Cause then, and not barely the Suffering that makes the Martyr: to suffer in a good Cause, is to be a Partaker of Christ's Sufferings, which is a matter of exceeding great Joy; *If ye be reproach'd for the Name of Christ (saith St. Peter) happy are ye, for the Spirit of Glory and of God resteth upon you:* But let none of you suffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil-doer, or Busy-body in other Mens Matters; for such Sufferings can afford no Comfort here, or Reward hereafter: *But if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf;* 1 Pet. 4. 13, 14, &c. In short,

we must not omit any Duty, or commit any Sin, for fear of suffering; but be ever ready, not only to do, but to suffer what we can for the Glory of God, and the Furtherance of the Gospel. This is the Cross that Christ hath borne before us, and expects his Disciples should take up and bear after him. And this will lead to the

Third and Last Qualification of his Disciples, which is to follow him: If any will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his Cross, and follow me. Where to follow Christ, is,

1. To follow his Doctrine. And,
2. To follow his Example; that is, to believe as he hath taught us, and to do as he hath practis'd.

1. Christ being *a Teacher come from God*, his Doctrine must be Divine, and consequently infallibly true and certain, and therefore worthy of all Acceptation; 'tis our Honour to learn of such a Master, and our Happiness to copy after so heavenly a Teacher.

2. And as his Doctrine, so his Example too is worthy of all Imitation: for tho no mere Man was ever fit to be follow'd in all things, all Men being subject to Errors and Failings, and the best having Vices as well as Vertues; yet Christ was so pure and perfect in all his ways, having no Sin, nor any Guile found in his Mouth, that we may safely tread in his Steps who never trod awry; we may and ought to receive his Doctrine, and in all things follow the Example of so unerring a Guide: *Be Followers of God* (saith St. Paul) *as dear Children*; Eph. 5. 1. *And be ye Followers of me, even as I am of Christ*; 1 Cor. 11. 1. He would have them to follow Christ absolutely and in all things, but him no farther than he follow'd Christ; *and he that abideth in him, ought so to walk as he walk'd*: 1 John 2. 6.

To conclude then, If we will be Christ's Disciples or Christians indeed, if we would so come after him here, as to come to him hereafter; let us deny our selves for him, who so readily deny'd himself for us, and parted with all that was dear to him for our sake. Let us take up the Cross, which he hath so patiently borne before us, and thereby sanctify'd it to us, and plac'd it in the way to a never-fading Crown. And, Lastly, Let us follow him in all things wherein he is imitable by us, conforming our Lives to the Pattern of his most holy Life, and to all his Carriage

Carriage towards God and Men. And by thus following him in Grace here, we shall, e'er long, follow him to Glory: Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XXIV.

The G O S P E L for St. *James's* Day.

Mat. XX. 20 ——— 29.

Then came to him the Mother of Zebedee's Children, with her Sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two Sons may sit, the one at thy Right Hand, and the other on the Left in thy Kingdom. But Jesus answer'd and said, Ye know not what ye ask, &c.

THE Epistle for this Day being handled, partly in the Epistle for St. *Barnabas's* Day, and partly in the Epistle for St. *Peter's* Day, I shall, to avoid Repetition, refer the Reader to both, and proceed to treat at this time of the Gospel for this Day, which begins thus; *Then came to him, that is, to Jesus, the Mother of Zebedee's Children.* When this was, the Verses immediately going before declare; it was when *Jesus was going up to Jerusalem with his twelve Disciples*, ver. 17, 18. to whom he discover'd, in the way, the Time and Manner of his Death, to prevent their being surpriz'd or seiz'd with sudden Trouble, to see him deliver'd up without any notice: withal telling them, that *on the third Day*, after they had put him to death, *he should rise again*; ver. 19.

Now upon the mention of his Resurrection, which they suppos'd to be the time of his being exalted to his Kingdom, *the Mother of Zebedee's Children came with her Sons*; that is, with *James* and *John*, two of his Disciples; who putting their Mother upon it, came with her to Jesus, worshipping or falling down on her Knees to present a Petition to him,

desiring a certain thing of him. Our Saviour seeing her in that humble Posture, and thinking that she had something to ask, *said unto her, What wilt thou?* She prompted (as 'tis thought) by her two Sons, who had too much of Ambition in them, *saith unto him, Grant that these my two Sons may sit, the one at thy right Hand, and the other on the left, in thy Kingdom.* Which Request was grounded on those words of our Saviour to his Disciples, *Mat. 19. 28. Verily I say unto you, that ye who have follow'd me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.* Where he seems to promise his Followers, that as soon as he came to his Kingdom, which they suppos'd to be immediately after his rising again from the Dead, they should be highly honour'd and advanc'd by him. The thing there promis'd seems to refer to the Dignity vouchsaf'd to the Sons of *Jacob*, of being the Heads of all the Tribes of *Israel*; among which his two Sons *Joseph* and *Judah* had the first Places. In allusion hereunto, the Mother of *Zebedee's* Children desires of our Saviour, that her two Sons *James* and *John*, who had left all to follow him, might be remembred and promoted to the highest Seats of Honour in his Kingdom, the one at his right Hand, the other at his left, in his Throne of Glory. By which we see, that the very Disciples themselves mistook the nature of Christ's Kingdom, taking it for a temporal Kingdom, or a Kingdom of this World, and so dreamt of nothing but golden Mountains and great Preferments; as appears by that Saying of the Apostles after his Resurrection, *Wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom unto Israel?* *Acts 1. 6.* Which farther shews us the Proneness of Mankind to Ambition, and to aspire too much to worldly Greatness. Few can be content with their lower Stations, but all are for mounting to Places of Honour, and climbing above others: The Sparks do not more naturally fly upward, than Mens Minds are for rising and aspiring to great things. Little things are commonly overlook'd and despis'd, yea and counted as nothing; 'tis only the greater Objects that draw the Eyes, and fix the Desires of the Mind upon them. This is evident in these two Disciples, whose sight was dazzled with the Splendor of worldly Greatness, and thereby betray'd into inordinate Lustings and Longings after it.

But what Reply did our Saviour make to the Request of the Mother, and the Ambition of her two Sons? Why, such

such a one as check'd the Vanity and Ambition of both; for *Jesus answer'd and said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask.* Your Desires run after vain things, and are carry'd out to matters not proper for you to ask, or me to give: It all proceeds from Ignorance of the Manner of my Kingdom, and the End of my Coming, for I came rather to suffer than to reign here upon Earth; and if you will be my Disciples, you must count more upon Crosses and Troubles, than upon Crowns and Scepters. This hath been my Lot here, and will be your Portion too, if you will be my Followers.

Let me therefore ask you another Question, saith he; *Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with?* that is, instead of an overflowing Cup of Mirth and Joyfulness, can you pledg me in my bitter Cup of Affliction, and take it off too, as I am about to do, to the very dregs? Can you be plung'd over head and ears in the Waters of Adversity, as I have been in the Waters of Baptism? And bear those Sorrows and Sufferings for me, which I have undergone for you? To which they answer'd, and *said unto him, We are able.* A bold and confident Answer, that shew'd too great a Presumption upon their own Strength! like St. Peter, who boldly told our Saviour, that tho all the World should deny him, yet would not he deny him; tho upon the first Apprehension of Danger, he shamefully deny'd him three times, with many bitter Oaths and Execrations. Which should teach us not to rely too much upon our own Strength, nor build our Confidence on so weak a Foundation; but rather to suspect our selves, to be sensible of our own Weakness, and to be daily imploring the Divine Blessing and Assistance.

But the Disciples here seem to make their Pretence of Patience a Motive to their Preferment, and urge their Magnanimity in suffering to raise them to the greater Glories: We are able and ready to suffer, and therefore hope to be advanc'd.

But Christ gave them such an Answer, as serv'd at once to encourage their Patience, and to check their Ambition: for he said unto them, *Ye shall drink indeed of my Cup, and be baptiz'd with the Baptism that I am baptiz'd with.* Ye shall have the honour of suffering with and for me, and of exercising the most difficult and heroical Acts of Christianity: *But to sit on my Right Hand, and on my Left, is not*

mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. Where he is so far from promising any Preferment here in this World, that he bids them prepare for Persecutions. He doth not flatter his Followers with vain Expectations of earthly Glories and Advantages, but tells them the Truth; *In the World ye shall have Persecution, and through many Tribulations shall ye enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* You shall (saith he) drink of my bitter Cup, and be overwhelm'd with the Waters of the Proud, as I have been plung'd in the Waters of Jordan: You shall be Partakers of the Troubles and Afflictions that befall me, and thereby be made in some measure perfect and conformable to my Sufferings; by which you shall be no Losers, but great Gainers in the end. But for any worldly Privileges of Honour and Dignity above others, I have no Authority to dispose of them, they being left to the disposal of Divine Providence, and shall be given to those for whom the Father hath design'd them.

From whence we may learn to be so far from coveting any earthly Honours and Advancement, that we should be daily looking and preparing for Afflictions, which many times tend to our greater advantage than all worldly Prosperity, as the Rod sometimes better promotes the Scholar's Proficiency than fond and kinder Usage. *The Disciple (saith our Saviour) is not above his Master, nor the Servant above his Lord; Mat. 13. 2. It is enough for the Disciple to be as his Master, and the Servant as his Lord.* And if they deal thus hardly with me, ye cannot in reason expect better Usage: for the Servant that is under must not look to be above his Master, and *every one that is perfect shall be as his Master, Luke 6. 40.* that is, all true Disciples of Christ must be content to suffer as their Master hath suffer'd before them; this is their Portion, which will make them, as he was, perfect by suffering. So that Christ, to check the Ambition of his Disciples, insisted more on the Troubles and Calamities, than the Triumphs and Glories of this World, to take off their Minds from all fond doating upon and admiring of them.

But how did the other Apostles take the aspiring Humour and Ambition of these two Disciples, who labour'd to get so much above them? Why, not well, to be sure; for the next words tell us, that *when the Ten heard it, they were moved with Indignation against the two Brethren.* One Man's Advancement is commonly an Eye-sore to another, and

and few can willingly see their Equals or Inferiours to rise above them ; for it upbraids to them their own Fortunes, and makes them think that as others come on, they themselves go back. Envy, like the Sun, darts its hottest Beams on the rising Ground ; and they that seek to rise highest and soonest, are most malign'd. There is a Vanity in most Men to court Preheminence, and to desire to be uppermost ; they are all willing to mount, and cannot endure to see any get above them : which if they do, they either study by all means to pull them down, or by Reproaches and Calumnies to eclipse the Glory and Grandeur of their Station.

Now our Saviour Christ, to put a stop to this Vanity, which he found too predominant in his own Disciples, *call'd them unto him, and said, Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great exercise Authority upon them ; but it shall not be so among you.* Where our Saviour does not altogether disallow Dominion, nor condemn the Exercise of Authority among Christians, for that is absolutely necessary to the good Government of the World ; but he would not have his Disciples too much to affect those things, nor follow the custom of Heathen Princes, who use their Authority more for their own Grandeur than the Peoples Good. He would not have them domineer over others, nor with *Diotrephes* love to have the Preheminence ; but to be meek and lowly in Heart, not minding high things, but condescending to Men of low Estate. *Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister ; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant :* that is, Affect not Power for any secular or sinister Ends, to appear to be somebody, and to lift up your selves above others ; but to do good Offices, and to administer to the Service of the Church.

St. Luke, in relating of this Passage, tells us, *Chap. 22. 24. that there was a Strife among the Apostles, which of them should be accounted the greatest ; occasion'd by the Request of Zebedee's Wife for her two Sons, that they might be look'd upon and prefer'd before the rest.*

St. Mark relates it as a Petition of the two Sons themselves, *James and John, who pray'd our Saviour to grant that they might sit, one at his Right Hand, and the other at his Left, in his Glory ; Mark 10. 35, 37.*

This aspiring Humour of these two Disciples highly displeas'd the rest, and begat a great Contention among them; which our Saviour perceiving, he sharply rebuk'd their Vanity, telling them, that they being call'd out of the World, should not affect the Poms and Vanities of it, which they had solemnly left and renounc'd; and that they ought to place their chief Honour and Dignity, not in commanding, as it is in worldly Lordships, but in humbly and faithfully serving for the Good and Salvation of Mankind: which would bring them to greater Glory than all earthly Desires or Designs could advance them to. Herein we shall imitate our Saviour, and follow the Example of his great Humility; for *the Son of Man came not to be minister'd unto, but to minister, and to give his Life a Ransom for many.* He came not to be waited upon or attended as Kings and Princes use to be, but to serve and minister to the Necessities of his Inferiours: and therefore when his Disciples contended for Greatness and Superiority over one another, he puts the Question to them, *Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.* He took upon him not only the Form, but the Office and Business of a Servant, and acquitted himself therein as a true and humble Servant; yea, he condescended so far, as to serve us even to the very Death, and gave his Life a Ransom for many. In short, tho whilst he was here he was by far the best and greatest Man upon Earth, yet he carry'd himself with that Meekness, Humility, and Respect, as if he had been the least. He admir'd none for their Wealth, nor despis'd any for their Poverty; he was no Respector of Persons, but Poor and Rich, that fear'd God and did Righteousness, were alike to him: He affected no Titles of Honour, nor hunted after Power or popular Applause, he rather declin'd than delighted in those things; but he willingly stoop'd to the meanest Services, even to the washing his Disciples Feet, and declin'd nothing wherein he could do good to any, and hath willed us by his Example to do likewise; *Learn of me* (saith he) *for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* So that to insult or domineer, or to usurp any undue Authority over others, is to act quite contrary to our Saviour, and to be rather *Lucifer's* than Christ's Disciples.

Thus

Thus we see the Drift and Design of the Gospel for this Day ; which is partly to shew the Proneness of Mankind to Ambition, and partly to shew the Folly and Vanity of it, and partly likewise to direct to the best Cure and Remedy of it.

The Proneness of Mankind to Ambition, may be seen here in the Mother of *Zebedee's* Children ; who taking Christ's Kingdom to be of this World, vainly besought him that her two Sons might be prefer'd in it, the one to the honour of *sitting at his Right Hand, the other on his Left, in his Kingdom.* Neither was this the Weakness of the Mother only, but the aspiring Humour of her two Sons *James* and *John* : which occasion'd a great *Strife among the Apostles, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* The like Contention is still found among the Sons of Men, who generally court Preheminence, and strive to advance themselves above others.

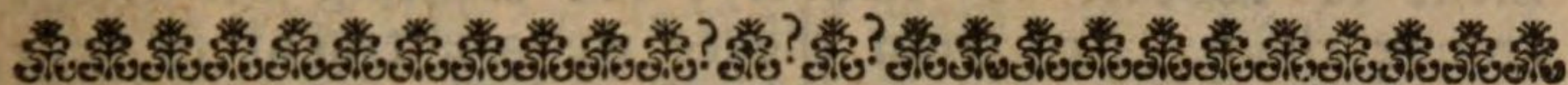
The Folly and Vanity whereof may be easily seen in the Emptiness of the things they so eagerly seek and hunt after : for what is all the Glory of the World, but a Shadow, a Vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away ? What are all Titles of Honour, but great swelling Words of Vanity, which have nothing of Substance and Reality in them, and signify no more to them that are used to them, than it doth to others to be call'd by their own Names ? The empty Air of Applause and the Praise of Men consists only in the vain Breath of the Multitude, which is more variable and inconstant than the Wind ; and he that values himself upon it, lies at the mercy of every reviling Tongue, which is able at any time to afflict and discompose him. And as for Power and Authority over others, of which many are too ambitious, what is it but a matter of Trouble and Disquiet, accompany'd with the Loss of Liberty and the Power over a Man's self ? And therefore God Almighty, to clip the wings of Ambition, sent a Message by *Jeremiah* to *Baruch* the Son of *Neriah*, who vainly affected these things, in these words ; *Seekest thou great things for thy self ? seek them not, for behold I will bring trouble upon all Flesh, saith the Lord.* Jer. 45. 5.

And our Saviour, to cure this Itch of mounting, with which many of his Disciples were infected, tells them, that however the Men of this World may affect Dominion,

nion, grasp at Power, and exercise Authority over others, yet it must not be so among them: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serveth. Luke 22. 25, 26.

But to cure this Swelling or Rising of the Mind, our Saviour propounds to them his own Example; bidding them to *learn of him*, not only from his Sayings and Sermons, but from his Doings, to be *meek and lowly in Heart*. For tho he was *equal with God*, yea, tho he was himself *God blessed for ever*; yet he empty'd himself of his Glory, and took upon him the Nature and Infirmities of Man: And having done so, he was so far from affecting to be the greatest of Men, or lifting up himself above his Brethren, that he made himself one of the least, and *took upon him the Form of a Servant*; which he did, merely to teach us the Lessons of Humility and Self-abasement. How then can any who call themselves his Disciples and Followers, swell and look big, and think it beneath them to stoop for the Good of their Fellow-Creatures? Especially since Christ hath made Humility the way to Honour, and Pride to go before a Fall; saying, *He that exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted*. Mat. 23. 12.

Wherefore, to draw to a Conclusion, let us learn from the Gospel for this Day to mortify all Pride and ambitious Aspiring above others, and learn the excellent Lessons of Humility and Lowliness of Mind; for *God resisteth the Proud, and giveth his Grace only to the Humble*. Ambition is a Sin hateful to God and Man, for both conspire to pull down the high Looks of the Proud, and to advance the Humble and Meek: 'tis often attended with Discontent, and never affords the Satisfaction it promises. *Humble your selves therefore under the mighty Hand of God*, and then he will either bring you to Honour in this World, or in his due time exalt you to far more permanent and everlasting Honour in the World to come: which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, &c.



DISCOURSE XXV.

The EPISTLE for St. Bartholomew's Day.

ACTS v. 12——17.

By the Hands of the Apostles were many Signs and Wonders wrought among the People; and they were all with one Accord in Solomon's Porch. And of the rest durst no Man join himself unto them: but the People magnify'd them. And Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of Men and Women, &c.

THE Saint, whose Memory we celebrate this Day, is St. *Bartholomew*, who was one of the twelve Apostles, and a Fellow-Labourer with the rest in the Work of the Gospel.

He is generally believ'd to be the same Person with *Nathaniel*, and not without good reason; for in the several Catalogues of the Apostles, reckon'd up by the several Evangelists, where *Bartholomew* is mention'd, there *Nathaniel* is omitted; and where *Nathaniel* is mention'd, there *Bartholomew* is omitted: of which no better Account can be given, than that it was the same Person having two Names, and promiscuously call'd by either. St. *John* particularly reckons *Nathaniel* in the number of the Apostles, *John* 21. 1, 2. who if taken for a distinct Person from St. *Bartholomew*, would increase the number of the Apostles to thirteen. And as St. *Matthew* joins *Philip* and *Bartholomew* together, so St. *John* still couples *Philip* and *Nathaniel*; which plainly shews them to be the same Person under different Names.

The Collect for this Day takes notice of God's giving Grace to this Apostle truly to believe and to preach his Word; which he did with great Fidelity and Success, in the Countries of *India* and *Aethiopia*, together with the Western
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and Northern Parts of *Asia*, where he was a great Instrument of rooting out Idolatry, and planting the Gospel among them. And from thence we are taught to pray, that God would grant to his Church Grace, to *love the Word which he believ'd, and to receive the Doctrine which he preach'd*: by his Example firmly adhering to it, and persevering in it even to the end.

The Epistle for the Day speaks of the many Miracles and wonderful Works done by St. *Bartholomew* and the other Apostles, for the Confirmation of the Truths which they deliver'd. In which Epistle therefore I must consider and treat,

First, Of the Matter of Fact, that many and great Miracles and wonderful Works were wrought by the Apostles among the People.

Secondly, Of the great End and Design of them, *viz.* the Confirmation of the Gospel.

Thirdly, Of the Efficacy and Success of them upon the Minds of the People. All which things being held forth in the Epistle for this Day, must be briefly consider'd. And I begin,

First, With the Matter of Fact here related; to wit, that *by the hands of the Apostles were many Signs and Wonders wrought among the People*. After our Saviour's Ascension up into Heaven, we read that the Apostles were *endow'd with Power from on high*: for soon after, upon the Day of Pentecost, he shower'd down upon them the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, to enable them to preach and propagate the Christian Faith among all Nations. Upon which Descent of the Holy Ghost, they were endow'd with a Divine Power of working Miracles; for so we read, *Acts 2. 43.* that quickly upon it *many Wonders and Signs were done by the Apostles*. Upon their praying to God *to stretch forth his Hands to heal, many Signs and Wonders were done by the Name of Jesus, and they spake the Word with Boldness.* *Acts 4. 30, 31.*

Whilst our Saviour was upon Earth, he did almost all the Miracles himself in his own Person, to prove himself the true and only Messiah. St. *John* did no Miracle, lest he should draw the eyes of the People upon him, and so their Minds should be distracted between them. And when *John* sent some of his Disciples to Christ for their
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full Satisfaction of his Messiahship, he bid them go and tell *John* what they had seen and heard; *that the Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear, the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached unto them*; Mat. 11. 4, 5. And many believ'd on him, when they saw the Miracles that he did, *John* 2. 23. and more largely in *John* 10. where he appeals to his Miracles, for the Truth of his Messiahship.

But upon Christ's ascending up into Heaven, and going to his Father, he promis'd to send his Holy Spirit to his Apostles; which should enable them *not only to do the Works that he did, but greater Works than those*, *John* 14. 12. Accordingly he pour'd down his Spirit upon them, by which they were empower'd to *cast out Devils, to speak with new Tongues, to take up Serpents, to drink any deadly thing without hurt, and to recover the Sick by laying their Hands upon them*; Mark 16. 17. They made the Lame to walk, the Blind to see, the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak; yea, they struck down some dead, as we read of *Ananias* and *Sapphira* in this Chapter, and rais'd others to Life. These and many more Signs and Wonders were wrought by the hands of the Apostles among the People.

And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch; that is, they solemnly met together to preach and do Miracles in the Entrance of the Temple, call'd *Solomon's Porch*, where the People gather'd together to hear their Doctrine, and to see the wonderful Works done by them. Which things begat such a Reverence and Dread of the Apostles, that the *rest of the Disciples or Believers durst not join themselves unto, or consort with them*; for *all the People magnify'd them, and held them in great Veneration*.

But, *Secondly*, what was the End or Design of those Miracles, Signs, and Wonders, that were done by the hands of the Apostles? Why, that was for the Confirmation of their Doctrine, and the Propagation of the Gospel preach'd by them: for the Novelty, Difficulty, and seeming Incredibility of their Doctrine, requir'd the greatest and most convincing Evidence of its Truth and Certainty, without which it would have found no Acceptance. The Minds both of Jews and Gentiles were then possess'd with such strong and inveterate Prejudices against it, that nothing less than the Testimony and Authority of God was sufficient to remove them. Now the only certain Evidence of
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any Doctrine's being Divine, is the Testimony of Miracles: for there is nothing that pretends to come from God, can any otherwise appear to do so, but by something that is apparently Divine; and there is nothing apparently Divine, but what is the miraculous Effect of a Divine Power: and consequently, Miracles only can attest the Divinity of any Doctrine. These are as it were the Broad Seal of Heaven, and whatever brings that, or stands confirm'd by it, may be rationally suppos'd and receiv'd as coming from God; for none but God can really alter the Course of Nature, or do any thing above or contrary to the settled Order and Course of the Universe; nor doth he ever do this, but upon weighty and considerable Occasions. He is not wont to work Miracles, only to gratify the Curiosity of vain Persons, and much less to ratify any forg'd Message or Commission from him. He often refus'd to exert his Divine Power to any such purposes, saying, *A wicked and adulterous Generation seeketh after a Sign, and there shall be no Sign given to it, &c.* He will not set his Seal to a Blank, or to any trivial or evil purpose: whatever Message or Messenger brings these Credentials with him, may be well enough look'd upon as Divine, and worthy of all Acceptation. And upon this account, *Nicodemus* own'd Christ to be a *Teacher come from God, because none could do the Works that he did, except God were with him; John 3.*

And for this reason too, the Apostles were endow'd with a Power of working Miracles, to beget the greater Credit and Veneration to their Doctrine. And this was no more than was necessary at that time, when the Law of *Moses*, which was settled by Miracles, being to be taken away, I mean as to the Ritual and Ceremonial Part of it, and the Gospel-Dispensation to be establish'd in its room; it was requisite there should be the same, or as great Evidence for the taking it away, as there was at the first giving of it; and that the Gospel should be as firmly settled and confirm'd as ever the Law was. Which made the Jews so often ask for Signs and Wonders to confirm the new Revelations of the Gospel; which our Saviour did not wholly reject as in it self unreasonable, but their unreasonable way and manner of asking, not from any real Desire of Satisfaction, but from a Design of tempting and intrapping of him, prescribing to him what manner of Miracles they would have: for they werent content with

with the miraculous Works done by him upon Earth, but would needs have some Signs from Heaven, such as the Thundrings and Lightnings that accompany'd the giving of the Law: not considering that the miraculous Cures of Christ and his Apostles were far greater Instances of a Divine Power, and more suitable to the End of their Mission and Doctrine, than all the Thunderclaps on Mount Sinai. And tho' those terrible Signs best suited the Severity and Rigour of the Law, yet their sanative Miracles were more agreeable to the Grace and Mildness of the Gospel; the confirming and promoting whereof, was one great End of the many Signs and Wonders wrought by the hands of the Apostles.

2. Another End was the subduing the Power and subverting the Kingdom of Satan. Hence the Apostles converting the Gentiles is describ'd by *turning them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God; Acts 26. 18.* 'Tis certain the Devil had a great Power and Dominion over the Gentile World at the time of our Saviour's Coming; the evil Spirits had taken possession of the Souls and Bodies of many. Hence we read of such a multitude of Demoniacks in the Gospel, which were Persons possess'd of the Devil, and by him grievously tormented: the Providence of God permitting Satan to have the greater Power and Liberty at that time, to heighten the Glory of dispossessing him, and thereby destroying the Force and Power of his Kingdom; which was done by the Signs and Wonders wrought by the hands of the Apostles, to whom our Saviour, among other things, gave the Power of casting out Devils. Hence the Disciples of Christ were wont to insult over the Devil wherever they found him, making him (as one hath observ'd) to remove his Lodgings from possess'd Persons, by a Writ of Ejectment in the Name of Christ; the mentioning whereof, was wont to make the Fiends and evil Spirits tremble. By which our Saviour exactly fulfill'd the Promise made to his Disciples at his departing from them, *Mark 16. 17. These Signs shall follow them that believe, in my Name they shall cast out Devils, and do many wonderful Works;* which are here said to be wrought by them.

From the End of these Signs and Wonders, let us consider,

Thirdly, The Efficacy and Success of them, what effects they had upon the Minds of Men : and this, we are here told, was very great ; for *Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of Men and Women*. The Miracles wrought by the Apostles were so astonishing, and carry'd that Conviction with them, that many embrac'd the Faith preach'd by them, and fell a praising God, who gave such Gifts unto Men. Yea, so strong was their Faith in this matter, that *they brought their Sick into the streets, and laid them on Beds and Couches, that at least the Shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them*. Such Confidence had they of the Apostles Power of working miraculous Cures, that they believ'd the very Shadow of *Peter* walking by a diseased Person was able to heal him ; and therefore they put some impotent and infirm Persons, that could not stand or go, in the way of the Apostles, that as they came by, their Shadow at least might come over some of them. Not that there was any inherent Virtue in the Apostles Bodies, or much less in their Shadows or Garments ; but that God was pleas'd to add his healing Grace and Blessing to these things, to encourage and increase their Faith in him : the Fame whereof spread so far into the Country and Regions round about, that *Multitudes came out of all Cities unto Jerusalem, bringing sick Folks, and them which were vexed with unclean Spirits ; and they were healed every one*.

This is briefly the Sense and Substance of the Epistle for this Day, which contains the Divine Testimony given to confirm the Apostles Doctrine ; and that was, by the many Signs and Wonders done by them among the People : which carry'd that Conviction with them, as to profelyte the World to the Belief of it. For if any doubted of the Truth and Divinity of what they deliver'd, they would soon convince them by raising some dead Person to Life again, by giving Sight to the Blind and Feet to the Lame, and by many other Signs and Miracles set their Faith beyond any just Doubt or Contradiction ; call'd therefore *the Demonstration of the Spirit and Power*.

But because Impostors have pretended to and done some things like Miracles, to countenance their Impostures, and to elude the Force of the true, as the Magicians imitated the Miracles of *Moses*, and *Simon Magus* and others aped the

the Miracles of Christ and the Apostles ; and because Antichrist is said to come with Signs and lying Wonders, it will be requisite to know how to discern true Miracles from the false and counterfeit. And this may be known partly by the Manner and Circumstances of their Operation, and chiefly from the Doctrines which they are wrought to confirm.

For the first, True Miracles are such as exceed the Power of Art and Nature, and are effected only by a supernatural and divine Power ; and such were the Miracles of *Moses* and the Prophets in the Old Testament, and of Christ and his Apostles in the New. Whereas the false Miracles of Impostors are done by the Illusions of Satan, by Sleight of Hand, or Deception of the Eye, or by other magical Arts and Enchantments : and such were those of the Magicians, who were so far out-done by *Moses*, that they were forc'd to own the Finger of God in his Miracles, and the Hand of Satan in their own. So likewise the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles far exceeded, for Nature and Kind, those of *Simon Magus* and the false Prophets, who did some small things, that made a great show and noise, but none of them ever came near to the Miracles of the Apostles, who gave Sight to those that were born blind, and Feet to them that had never walk'd ; yea, and restor'd the Dead to Life again.

And as they exceeded all such Pretenders in the Kind and Greatness of their Works, so did they in the Manner of doing them ; for they did them with a Word, with a Touch, with a Look, and sometimes without any Means at all, and that not only near at hand, but at the greatest distance.

And whereas the Juggles of Impostors are commonly done in corners, in the dark, or by false Lights ; the Miracles of the Apostles were done openly in the face of the Sun, in the view of the World, and in the sight of their very Enemies : which have had that wonderful Efficacy and Success, as to proselyte them to that Faith, which they before persecuted and despis'd.

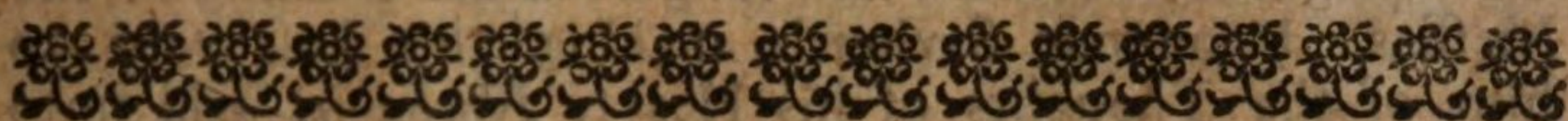
But the main difference between true and false Miracles relates to the Doctrine or Testimony which they are brought to confirm. Those cannot be Divine Miracles, which are done to confirm any false Doctrine, or what is contrary to the Holy Scriptures, which are the true Stan-

dard of sound Doctrine, and the true Rule of judging all Pretenders to Miracles: for God himself hath charg'd us, that *if there arise among us a Prophet or Dreamer of Dreams, and give thee a Sign or a Wonder, saying, Let us go after other Gods and serve them; thou shalt not hearken to the Words of that Prophet, for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you will love and serve him with all your heart.* Deut. 13. 1, 2. By which it appears, that the worshipping the true God is the Standard whereby to judg all Pretenders to Miracles. So that let Signs and Wonders be what they will, if they contradict the Will of God reveal'd to us in Holy Scripture, we are to look upon them as Trials of our Faith, and not real Miracles.

Wherefore, to conclude, let us firmly adhere to the Doctrine of Christ, which is confirm'd to us by undoubted Miracles; and not be drawn from it by any pretended Signs and Wonders whatever: which God grant for the Merits of Jesus Christ, &c.



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DISCOURSE XXVI.

St. Bartholomew's Day.

John i. 47.

Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no Guile!

INSTEAD of the Gospel for this Day, which is in effect the same with the foregoing Gospel on St. James's Day, and so needs no farther Explication; I shall consider the Manner and Motive of St. Bartholomew's becoming a Disciple of Christ, with the Character our Saviour gave of him, and the Use we are to make of both. Of which things St. John here gives us some brief Account.

For the Manner of his coming to be a Disciple of Christ, St. John tells us, it was by the Advice and Direction of Philip; who being himself call'd to the Discipleship, goes and finds out Nathaniel, probably his intimate Friend and Companion, and suppos'd to be the same Person with Bartholomew under different Names, as was before observ'd. Philip having found him, saith unto him, *We have found him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph; ver. 45.* that is, we have found the Messiah. Nathaniel made no Objection against the Meanness of his Original, but only scrupled the Place of his Birth, saying, *Can there any Good come out of Nazareth? ver. 46.* it being proverbial, that *out of Nazareth ariseth no Prophet*: which made him ask the question, How the Messiah could come from thence? To which Philip gave no other Answer, but *come and see*; presuming that if he saw and heard him, he would soon be of another mind.

As he was going, *Jesus saw him at some distance coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no Guile!* meaning, that he was one, that with a

true upright Heart look'd and long'd for the Coming of the Messias. Upon our Saviour's making this Discovery to him of the Thoughts of his Heart, *Nathaniel* said unto him, *Whence knowest thou me?* To which Jesus reply'd, *Before that Philip call'd thee, when thou wast under the Fig-Tree, I saw thee:* Withal rehearsing to him many of the former Actions and minute Circumstances of his Life. Whereupon being astonish'd at his Omniscience, and the Divinity of his Sayings, he breaks out into this Confession, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.* Jesus pleas'd with his Confession, told him, that because he believ'd so heartily upon what he had heard and seen, he should see and hear greater things than these: and from thence yielded himself up, and became one of his Disciples.

This is briefly the Manner and Motive of *Nathaniel's* coming to Christ, and becoming one of his Apostles.

But the main thing I shall now insist upon, is that honourable Title or Compellation, which our Saviour, knowing his Heart, gave at his first coming to him; and that is in these words, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no Guile!* Which is a Commendation of his Sincerity, and recommends to us an upright Simplicity and Singleness of Heart in all our Actions. In the Words therefore I shall observe the following Particulars:

First, The Character of a good Man, who is here stiled *an Israelite indeed*, or a Christian indeed.

Secondly, A farther Description of him by his Integrity, that he is one *in whom there is no Guile.*

Thirdly, The Notice or Observation we are to take of such a one, imply'd in the word *Behold:* *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no Guile!* Of each of these briefly. And,

First, Of the Character here given of a good Man, to wit, *an Israelite or Christian indeed.* An *Israelite* in general is one that is descended from the Posterity of *Abraham*, in whose Seed all the Nations of the Earth were to be blessed; call'd therefore *the Heirs of Promise*, and the peculiar People of God, dignify'd and distinguish'd from others by many high and invaluable Privileges. These were the *Israelites* mention'd by *St. Paul*, *Rom. 9. 4, 5.* *Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the Adoption, and the Glory, and*
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the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises; whose are the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the Flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.

The Name was more immediately deriv'd from *Jacob*, who for his wrestling and prevailing with God, had his Name chang'd from *Jacob* to *Israel*; because *as a Prince he had Power with God, and with Men, and had prevail'd.* Gen. 32. 28. & Chap. 35. 10. For which reason, the twelve Tribes which descended from *Jacob* have been ever since call'd by the Name of *Israelites*.

But *they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; Rom. 9. 6.* All that sprung from the Stock of *Abraham*, are not the true Seed of *Abraham*, but they only who tread in the steps of the Faith of Father *Abraham*; without which it will be in vain to say, *We have Abraham to our Father,* Mat. 3. 6. Nor were all they that descended from the Seed of *Jacob* the true *Israelites*, but such only as inherited the Virtues, and follow'd the Example of their Father *Jacob*. *He is not a Jew (saith the Apostle) which is one outwardly, neither is that Circumcision that is outward in the Flesh; but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the Heart in the Spirit, and not in the Letter; whose Praise is not of Men, but of God.* Rom. 2. 23. The Privileges of the *Israelites* belong not to all that are of the Stock of *Jacob*, nor was the Promise made to the carnal, but the spiritual Seed of *Abraham*, to Believers begotten after the Image of his Faith; these were the true *Israelites*, the Children of the Promise, and the Heirs of Salvation.

And such a one was *Nathaniel*, an *Israelite* indeed; that is, one who was not only outwardly so, by descending from the Loins of *Jacob*; but inwardly so, by embracing the Faith of *Abraham*. And as an *Israelite* indeed was then the Character of a good Man, so is that of a Christian indeed the same now; that is, one that is not only in Name and Profession, but in Truth and Reality a good Christian: one that heartily receives the Doctrine, and readily follows the Example of our Blessed Saviour, loving him not in Word and in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth; such a one is a true *Israelite*, or a Christian indeed. And this is oppos'd to a nominal or hypocritical Christian, who hath only the Show and Appearance, but little or nothing of the Truth and Substance of Christianity. Such are they of whom St. Paul speaks, 2 Tim. 3. 5. *Having a Form of*
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Godliness, but denying the Power thereof: that is, taking upon them the Stile and Title of Christians, but doing nothing to answer and fill up that Character. St. James speaks of some that *seem to be Religious*, without being really so, and so *deceive themselves* and others with the empty Show of a *vain Religion*; Chap. i. 26. The Church of *Sardis* was said to *have a Name to live, but was dead*, Rev. 3. 1. pretending to live like Christians, when they were all the while no better than dead in Trespasses and Sins; and so like *Agrippa* were but almost Christians, not Christians indeed. In opposition to these, *Nathaniel* is here said to be an *Israelite* indeed, by receiving Christ as the Son of God and the King of *Israel*, and becoming his faithful Follower and Servant: and they that still do so, may be stiled *Israelites* or Christians indeed; the Character here given of a good Man. But this Character is here farther set forth,

Secondly, By an Account of his Sincerity, that he is one *in whom there is no Guile*. This is affirm'd here of *Nathaniel*, upon the account of his earnest looking and longing for the coming of the *Messias*, and hearty closing with him upon his first Appearance; that he laid aside all Prejudice and Partiality, and was soon satisfy'd in the Divinity of his Person and Doctrine, calling him *the Son of God and the King of Israel*. For which reason, Christ calls him an *Israelite* indeed, *in whom was no Guile*; meaning, that he was a Man of true Simplicity and Integrity, void of all Hypocrisy and Deceit.

And this is the Character of a truly good and vertuous Person, that he doth all things in Sincerity and Singleness of Heart, without any mixture of Guile or Falsehood.

Now Guile in general is a Subtlety of Invention, or a cunning Craftiness whereby Men lie in wait to deceive: And of this there are several kinds and degrees; as,

1st, There is the Guile of the Heart, which consists in evil Thoughts and Intentions.

2^{ly}, There is the Guile of the Head, which consists in Plots and evil Contrivances.

3^{ly}, There is the Guile of the Tongue, which consists in false and deceitful Speeches. And,

Lastly, There is the Guile of the Hand, which consists in fallacious Deeds and Practices. From all which, as *Na-*

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thaniel is here said to be free, so neither are they found in a good and upright Man. For the

1st, The Guile of the Thoughts, and Purposes of the Heart; of this the Holy Scriptures make frequent mention: *There are many Devices in Man's Heart* (saith Solomon) Prov. 19. 21. *The Heart of Man is deceitful above all things* (saith the Prophet Jeremy) *and desperately wicked, who can know it?* Jer. 17. 9. *Out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts* (saith our Saviour) Mat. 15. 19. that is the Fountain of Corruption, from whence all Impieties flow; and therefore God Almighty call'd upon Jerusalem to wash their Hearts from Wickedness, that evil Thoughts might not lodg in them. David describes a good Man to be one of a sound and upright Heart, and in whose Spirit there is no Guile; Psal. 32. 2. For himself he tells us, that he hated all evil Thoughts, as well as every false way, and walked before God with a faithful and true Heart; and every true Nathaniel will labour for Purity of Intention, and have no Guile found in his Heart.

2^{ly}, For the Guile of the Head, consisting in forming of Plots and evil Designs; that, as 'tis too frequent among bad Men, so is it abhor'd by all good Christians. The Psalmist speaks of some in his days, that took Counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, *Let us break their Bands asunder, and cast away their Cords from us*: Psal. 2. 2, 3. And we read of others, that cast their Heads together against God, and were confederate against him: And we have known many in our time, who delight in Plots and Conspiracies, and take pleasure in projecting and promoting Evil. But these are of their Father the Devil, and his Work they do, whilst they study Mischief, and contrive or countenance such Deeds of Darknes; whereas Charity thinketh no Evil, unless it be to abhor and suppress it, and a good Man hath no Guile found in his Head.

3^{ly}, For the Guile of the Tongue, consisting of Falshood in Words and Promises, by speaking one thing and meaning another, that likewise abounds too much in the World, whereby the Tongue, which is the Glory of Man, and was given for the Good of Mankind, is become the Instrument of Deceit, and the Spring of much Evil. David complains of it in his time; Psal. 12. 2, 3. *They talk Vanity every one with his Neighbour, they do but flatter with their Lips, and dissemble with their double Tongue; by which means Wickedness is among them, Deceit and Guile go not*
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out of their Streets ; Psal. 55. 11. *But God shall cut off (saith he) such lying and deceitful Lips, and the Tongue that speaketh proud things :* and therefore he cautions all Men against this sort of Guile, willing them to be true in all their Speeches, and faithful in all their Promises ; saying, *If any will live long and see happy Days, let them keep their Tongue from Evil, and their Mouth that they speak no Guile :* Psal. 34. 12, 13. St. Peter recommends this to us by the Example of our Saviour, *who did no Sin, nor was any Guile found in his Mouth ;* 1 Pet. 2. 22. This is in our Text affirm'd of *Nathaniel*, and is the Guise and Property of a good Man.

Lastly, For the Guile or Sleight of the Hand by evil Actions and Practices, wherein one thing is done, and another pretended, tho it be too common in the World, is yet a vile Enormity, to be abhorr'd of all good Men, and is so by every true *Nathaniel* or Christian indeed, in whom is no Guile : and therefore St. Peter wills us to *lay aside all Guile, Hypocrisy and Evil-speaking, and with the Simplicity of new-born Babes to desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby :* 1 Pet. 2. 1, 2. In short then, Sincerity and Integrity of Mind is the best Character and Commendation of a good Christian ; and that relates to our Carriage both to God and Man.

1. Sincerity, as it relates to God, consists in the Purity of Mind and Intention in his Service, worshipping him from a Principle of Love and Sense of Duty, not for any By-ends of Interest or Vain-glory ; like the *Pharisees*, who sought more the Praise of Men than the Glory of God, and did all their good Works for Vanity and Ostentation, for which reason they are blam'd and branded for their Hypocrisy : whereas the sincere Christian serves God for his own sake, admiring his Wisdom, extolling his Power, and adoring his Goodness, serving him not with the Lips or the Tongue only, but with the Heart and Soul, doing all things with a pure Conscience and Faith unfeign'd, and obeying all his Commandments without Partiality and without Hypocrisy.

2. Sincerity, as it relates to our Carriage towards Men, consists in an honest Simplicity of Mind and Manners in all our Dealings and Conversation with them, not saying or doing any thing contrary to the true Sense and Intent of our Mind, but preserving still a perfect Harmony and Agreement between our Words and Actions ; not saying
one

one thing and doing another, nor pretending greater Love and Kindness to any than we really feel. In short, to be sincere is to speak as we think, to act as we speak, to do as we profess, to perform what we promise, and to be inwardly the same that we outwardly appear to be. This is to be a true *Nathaniel* or *Israelite* indeed, without Fraud, and without Guile. From whence I proceed, in the

Last Place, to the notice here taken of such by our blessed Saviour, imply'd in the word *Behold*; *Behold an Israelite indeed*; which denotes the Excellency and the Rarity of such a Person, and likewise the Notice we are to take of him, which is so to *behold*, as to imitate and tread in his Steps.

For the first, *Behold* is sometimes taken for a Word of Wonder, admiring and extolling the Person or Thing that follows it; such was that of St. John, *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World*: where he alarms the World with the Greatness of the Person, and the Glory of his Message, ushering in both with the Term of *Ecce*, *Behold*. When the Psalmist would set forth the Excellency of Unity, he doth it by prefixing the same Term of Admiration, *Behold, how good and pleasant a thing it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity*! Psal. 133. In like manner our Saviour, to honour the Person, and publish the Praises of *Nathaniel*, uses the same Phrase, *Behold an Israelite indeed*, &c. signifying it to be a Matter worth the Regard and Consideration of the Beholder.

Again, this Term *Behold*, denotes not only the Excellency, but the Scarceness and Rarity of the Sight, *Behold an Israelite indeed*; meaning, that this is not a Sight to be seen every day, or every where, but what you shall rarely see or meet with. We are not call'd upon to behold things that are frequent and common, these are wont to pass away without much Observation. 'Tis strange and unusual Objects that draw the Eyes, and call upon us to behold them; and therefore since the World abounds with Persons that are double-tongu'd and double-hearted, we are bid to behold an *Israelite* indeed, without Guile, and without Hypocrisy; a very rare and uncommon, as well as an excellent Sight, which we are so to behold, as to love, honour, and imitate.

1. I say, we are so to behold an *Israelite* indeed, as to love him for his Sincerity and Uprightness, which are such
lovely

lovely and amiable Qualities, as, while Reason and Religion remain, cannot but invite and attract the Affections.

2. We are so to behold, as to honour and esteem him, entertaining honourable and worthy Thoughts of him in our Minds, and expressing them outwardly in Words and Actions, as occasion shall require. But above all, we are,

3. So to behold him, as to imitate and follow his good Example, by laying aside all Guile and Hypocrisy, and doing all things in Simplicity and Singleness of Heart. This will recommend us in the sight of God and Men, and render all our Actions valuable and acceptable unto both.

To attain to this Sincerity, let us be ever mindful of God's all-seeing Eye, and live always as in his Presence, considering that *all our Ways are before him, and he pondereth all our Goings*; which will help to keep us tight to our Duty, and make us the same within as we appear without.

To which end, let us mortify all Ambition and worldly Interest, which are apt to corrupt our Minds, and misguide our Actions. To all which, let us add our devout Prayers for the Assistance of Divine Grace, and that will keep us pure and upright before him: Which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.



D I S-

DISCOURSE XXVII.

The **EPISTLE** for *St. Matthew* the Apostle's Day.

2 Cor. iv. 1—7.

Therefore seeing we have this Ministry, as we have received Mercy, we faint not; but have renounc'd the hidden things of Dishonesty, not walking in Craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by Manifestation of the Truth, commending our selves to every Man's Conscience in the sight of God, &c.

TH E Saint whose Memory we celebrate this Day, is *St. Matthew*, who from a Publican became an Apostle, and from an Exactor of Tribute became an Evangelist and an Example of Righteousness.

He was the Son of *Alpheus* and *Mary*, Sister or Kinswoman to the Blessed Virgin; born and bred, as 'tis suppos'd, at *Capernaum*, the Place of our Saviour's usual Residence. He was call'd also *Levi*, it being frequent among the Jews for the same Person to have several Names.

The Collect for the Day makes mention of God's calling him from the Receipt of Custom to the Office of an Apostle and Evangelist; and from thence teaches us to pray for Grace, to forsake all covetous Desires and inordinate Love of Riches, and to follow the same Lord Jesus Christ. In his Call to the Apostleship, we may observe,

I. His Diligence and Fidelity in the Work of the Ministry, to which he was call'd: which is the Subject of the Epistle. And,

II. His Readiness to obey our Saviour's Call to it: which is the Subject of the Gospel for this Day.

I begin at this time with the Epistle for the Day ; which contains St. *Matthew's* and the other Apostles Diligence and Fidelity in the Work of the Ministry, to which they were call'd. And,

First, It sets forth their Diligence and Perseverance in the Business of their Office without Weariness or Fainting, in these words ; *Therefore seeing we have this Ministry, as we have receiv'd Mercy, we faint not.* The illative Particle *therefore* shews the words to be an Inference from what went before. In the foregoing Chapter the Apostle had shew'd the Excellency of Christ's Ministry above that of *Moses*, and how far the Dispensation of the Gospel excels the Oeconomy of the Law. This latter (he tells us) was *the Ministration of Death, written and engraven in Stone*, and deliver'd by the hand of *Moses* ; which yet was so glorious in the Delivery, that the Children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the Face of *Moses*, for the Glory of his Countenance, tho that Glory was but transitory and to be done away. Whereas the Ministry of Christ is a Ministration of Righteousness, attended with a Glory that shall last for ever. The one is the Ministration of the *Letter*, that condemns and killeth ; the other of the *Spirit*, that giveth Life. From thence the Apostle argues, *If the Ministration of Condemnation be Glory, how much more doth the Ministration of Righteousness exceed in Glory?* Chap. 3. 7, 8, 9.

Having thus shew'd the exceeding great Excellency of the Gospel-Ministry above the Legal Dispensation, the Apostle acquaints us with the great Industry and Diligence used by them in preaching and publishing of it. *Therefore seeing we have this Ministry* (saith he) *as we have receiv'd Mercy, we faint not* : meaning, that having receiv'd their Commission from Christ to preach the Gospel to all Nations, and being intrusted with the Ministry of Reconciliation, they cease not to use their utmost Endeavours to promote and propagate it. *As my Father sent me* (saith our Saviour to his Apostles) *so send I you*, to instruct and advance the Salvation of Mankind, teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded them. And having receiv'd this Charge from Christ's own mouth, they gave all Diligence to attend the Work and Business of it ; they did not faint or tire, nor sink under the many Difficulties and Discouragements they met with in it, but manfully went on in
their

their Work with Patience and Perseverance. By which we are taught the Duty of God's Ministers, which is not to grow weary in well-doing, nor to faint under the Burden of their Calling; but according to the Ability that God hath given, chearfully to discharge their Office, and to perform the hardest Tasks of it with Courage and Constancy. So did *St. Paul* and the other Apostles, who went through many Perils by Sea and Land, to propagate the Gospel of Christ; and neither fear'd nor fainted under any Difficulties that happen'd in the way of their Duty and Profession. Such was their unweary'd Diligence in the Work of the *Ministry*, in which as they receiv'd Mercy, they fainted not.

Secondly, The Apostle declares not only their Diligence, but their Fidelity in the Discharge of their Office; laying aside all Guile and Hypocrisy, and doing all things in Sincerity and Singleness of Heart. This is express'd here,

- 1st, By the renouncing the hidden things of Dishonesty.
- 2ly, By not walking in Craftiness.
- 3ly, By not handling the Word of God deceitfully: but,
- 4ly, By the Manifestation of the Truth; and thereby commending themselves to every Man's Conscience in the sight of God.

1st, I say, the Apostle declares their Fidelity, by their renouncing all the hidden things of Dishonesty, by which we are to understand their shunning all the secret Arts of Impostors and false Teachers. What those are, the Scripture hints to us in sundry places: Our Saviour speaks of their coming in Sheeps-Clothing, that is, with soft and smooth Pretences, when inwardly they were ravening Wolves, that came only to bite and devour. Such were the *Pharisees*, who devour'd Widows Houses, and for a Pretence made long Prayers; *Mat. 23. 14.* And such were they of whom *St. Paul* speaketh, who with good Words and fair Speeches deceive the Hearts of the Simple, *Rom. 16. 18.* Of this kind were those false Apostles and deceitful Workers, who transformed themselves into the Apostles and Ministers of Christ, even as Satan transformed himself into an Angel of Light, *2 Cor. 11. 13, 14.* Now the true Apostles renounc'd all such vile Arts and Disguises, and in opposition to them tell us,

- 2ly, That they walked not in Craftiness. Craft, we know, is a crooked or sinister sort of Policy, and differs from

from Wisdom chiefly in point of Truth and Honesty : for Wisdom is attended with Integrity and Instruction, but Craft with Falshood and Deceit ; the one leads to Good, and the other to Evil. Hence *St. Paul* cautions against the *Sleight of Men and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive* ; Eph. 4. 14. By which is meant the subtle Arts and Methods of false Teachers, to beguile and seduce unwary People. Now the Apostle here declares, that they *walked not in this Craftiness*, nor used any such indirect Arts of Policy, but in Simplicity and godly Sincerity had their Conversation among them. So *St. Peter* affirms, *We have not follow'd any cunningly-devis'd Fables, when we made known the Coming of Christ, but were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty* ; 2 Pet. 1. 16. We do not seek to impose upon you by any Devices or Methods of Deceit, as the manner of some is ; not darkning Speech without Knowledg, nor misleading you by a Cloud or Ambiguity of Words : but we use all Plainness of Speech, and deliver nothing but what is confirm'd by the clear Evidence and Demonstration of the Spirit. Moreover,

3ly, To shew their Integrity, he tells us, that *they handled not the Word of God deceitfully*. As they did not the Work of the Lord negligently, so neither did they handle his Word deceitfully ; being *not slothful in Business, but fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord*. *St. Paul* calls the false Apostles *deceitful Workers*, 2 Cor. 11. 13. because their Study and Endeavours tend to the undermining of Christianity, as well as of the Hopes of Christians. *St. Peter* speaks of some false Teachers, who *by feigned Words make merchandize of the People*, 2 Pet. 2. 3. turning Hucksters of God's Word, and selling the Truth to get Gain : these *wrest the Scriptures to their own and others destruction*, straining them from their true genuine Sense, and putting false Interpretations upon them to serve their secular ends. Such as these *handle the Word of God deceitfully*, making it a Nose of Wax to bend any way, and perverting it to bad purposes. Of this sort are they (mention'd by *St. Paul*) who *creep into Houses, and lead captive silly Women, laden with Sin, and led away with divers Lusts* ; 2 Tim. 3. 6. By this means they come not to endure sound Doctrine, but after their own Lusts heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears ; turning away their Ears from the Truth, and turning them to Fables : Chap. 4. 3, 4. But tho many such false Prophets were gone abroad into the World, yet we are here

here told that the Apostles were none of that number, who adulterate the Word of God, and walk in Craftiness to deceive the People; but shew'd their Fidelity,

Lastly, *By Manifestation of the Truth, commending themselves to every Man's Conscience in the sight of God.* They dealt simply and plainly with all Men, declaring the Truth without any disguise, and mixing nothing of Sophistry or Design; but sincerely and uprightly manifesting unto them the Will of God. The false Teachers indeed vented Lyes in Hypocrisy, and set off their Errors and false Doctrines with feign'd Words and fair Pretences. But the Apostles of Christ used no such Arts, but plainly and purely deliver'd the Word of God, and spake nothing but the Truth, *as it is in Jesus.* And for this they appeal not only to the Testimony of God, who knew their Hearts, but to the Consciences of Men, who heard and receiv'd their Doctrine; *commending themselves to every Man's Conscience in the sight of God.* The false Apostles commended themselves only to the Fancies and Humours of their Hearers, and accommodated all their Words and Gestures more to the gratifying of itching Ears, and the Increase of Parties, than to the glorifying of God, or edifying the Church of Christ. But the true Apostles here commend themselves to Mens Consciences, and appeal to the Efficacy and Success of their Doctrine, and the Impression it leaves upon the Minds of them that receive it.

Thus we see how *St. Paul* labours here to clear the Integrity of the Apostles, the better to preserve the People from the Poison of Errors and Divisions, and to make way for the easier Reception of the Truths of the Gospel.

Now from the Plainness of the Doctrine, and the Simplicity of them that deliver'd it, the Apostle rightly infers, that none now can be ignorant of it, that are but heartily willing and desirous to know it; for *if our Gospel be hid* (saith he) *it is hid to them that are lost.* If the Knowledge of Christ be hid from any, it is from those that neither seek nor desire it, but err and stray from the Ways of Truth like lost Sheep. The Light of it shines to all that will open their Eyes to behold it; and if it be obscure to any, 'tis only to such obstinate Unbelievers as wilfully shut their eyes against it. 'Tis Mens bad Lives that blind their Minds, and harden their Hearts against the Truths of the Gospel: and now that the Light of it is come into the

World, Mens loving Darkneſs rather than Light is be-
 cauſe their Deeds are evil. 'Tis not the lack of ſufficient
 Evidence that keeps them from believing the Goſpel, but
 their corrupt Hearts make them unwilling to believe it,
 Its Doctrines give a greater check to their Luſts, than
 they are willing to receive; and they cannot eaſily bear
 thoſe Reſtraints, that Faith and Repentance would put
 upon them. So that if the Goſpel be hid, 'tis to them that
 are loſt to all Good-Manners, as well as to all future Hopes
 of eternal Life.

*In whom (as the Apoſtle goes on) the God of this World
 hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, leſt the
 Light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, who is the Image of
 God, ſhould ſhine unto them.* Where the Blindneſs of Un-
 believers Minds is aſcrib'd not to the Obſcurity of the
 Goſpel, which is clearly reveal'd to them; but to the Po-
 licy of Satan, who hides from them the Knowledg of Di-
 vine Truths, and ſo darkens their Minds, that they may
 not diſcern that glorious Light which ſhines in the Face
 of Jeſus Chriſt, who is the *Brightneſs of his Father's Glory,*
and the expreſs Image of his Perſon.

And here we may obſerve, that Satan or the Devil is
 ſtil'd *the God of this World*, from that uſurp'd Power and
 Dominion he long exercis'd over the Gentile World: and
 elſewhere he is ſtil'd *the Prince of the Power of the Air, the
 Spirit that ruleth in the Children of Diſobedience.* This
 evil Spirit, to preſerve his Kingdom of Darkneſs, ſeeks to
 keep Men in the Darkneſs of Error and Ignorance, that
 they may not diſcern the Evil of their Ways; and labours
 to hide the Goſpel from their Eyes, that the Light of it
 may not ſhine into their Hearts. He deſpairs of one
 whoſe Eyes begin to open, and therefore uſes all means to
 cloſe them, leſt they ſhould behold either the Deformity
 of Sin, or the Beauty of Holineſs, and ſo ſhould eſchew
 the one, and be enamour'd on the other; which would
 be the Downfall of his Kingdom.

Now as the End of Chriſt's coming was to deſtroy this
 Kingdom, by *turning Men from Darkneſs to Light, and
 from the Power of Satan unto God*; ſo the Deſign of the
 Goſpel preach'd by the Apoſtles, was to diſpel this Dark-
 neſs, and to ſhed abroad the Light and Love of Divine
 Truths into their Hearts: which Satan, to keep his hold,
 endeavours to frustrate, by blinding their Minds, and har-
 dening their Hearts in the ways of Sin and Error. And there-

therefore it concerns us to watch and arm our selves against his Devices, that we be not deluded or destroy'd by them.

But lest any should think that the Apostles aim'd at any secular Ends of Honour and Advantage to themselves in preaching the Gospel, and pulling down the Strongholds of Satan; we find them solemnly declaring in the following words, *We preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and our selves your Servants for Jesus sake:* meaning, that they design'd not their own Honour or Preferment in any thing they said or did, nor did they go about to magnify and exalt themselves by setting up the Kingdom of Christ; but purely aim'd at the Glory of God, and the advancing the Honour of our Saviour, which ought to be the main End of all our Actions. Adding, that as for themselves, they offer'd Men their Service to do them all good Offices *for Jesus sake*; that is, to gain them unto Christ, to establish his Kingdom within them, and to cause him to be serv'd and glorify'd by them. For this End, and not for any worldly Consideration, were our Minds enlighten'd with the Knowledg of Christ; and for this purpose were we commission'd to impart this Light unto others, in the Name and by the Authority of Jesus Christ.

So they tell us in the next words: *For God who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined in our Hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledg of the Glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* The Sense whereof is, that God who illuminated the dark unform'd Chaos, to give Light to the Inhabitants of the Earth, hath shin'd into our Hearts, to enlighten the benighted World; revealing the Mysteries of the Gospel to us, that we might reveal them to others; and instructing them in the Knowledg of the Glory of God, which we can only see in the Face of Jesus Christ. For as *Moses* could not see the Glory of God face to face, for the Lustre of his Countenance, but as it was reflected from an Angel in the Person of the Son of God; so neither can we behold his Glory, but as it is represented to us in the face of Jesus Christ.

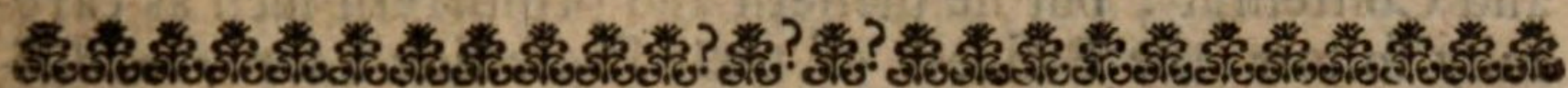
Thus we see the Sense of the Epistle for this Day; wherein we are taught,

1. The Duty of God's Ministers ; which is not to faint in the Work whereunto they are call'd, but to be diligent and faithful in the Discharge of their Ministry. *'Tis requir'd of Stewards* (saith the Apostle) *that they be found faithful*, neither doing their Master's Work negligently nor deceitfully : and this is more especially requir'd of the Stewards in God's Household, that they rightly dispense the Word of God, and give every one their Meat in due season ; thereby commending themselves to every Man's Conscience in the sight of God : and blessed is he whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

2. We learn here the Peoples Duty ; which is to hear and receive the Word, not as the Word of Man, but as indeed it is, the Word of God ; giving diligent heed lest at any time they let it slip. And that we may all so hear and so do, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. *Amen.*



DIS-



DISCOURSE XXVIII.

The GOSPEL for St. Matthew's Day.

St. Matthew ix. 9——13.

And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a Man named Matthew, sitting at the Receit of Custom; and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and follow'd him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at Meat in the House, behold many Publicans and Sinners came and sat down with him and his Disciples, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day gives us an Account of Christ's calling St. *Matthew* to the Apostleship; as also of the *Pharisees* Objection against his calling and conversing with *Publicans* and Sinners: together with our Saviour's Reply and Removal of that Objection. For his calling St. *Matthew* to the Apostleship, we have,

First, The Time and Place when and where he was call'd.

Secondly, The Trade or Course of Life he led before his Calling.

Thirdly, The Manner how he was call'd. And,

Lastly, His great Readiness in obeying the Call of our Saviour.

First, For the Time and Place of this Action, we are here told it was *as Jesus passed forth from thence*; that is, from *Capernaum*, the Place of his usual Residence; and went by the side of the Sea of *Galilee*, where he saw a *Man named Matthew, sitting at the Receit of Custom*. He beheld him busy at his Work, and for that reason cast a favourable Eye upon him. God Almighty loves Diligence in our Calling, and is well-pleas'd to see Men well-employ'd in the Works of their Vocation: He passeth by the Idle

and the Slothful, and suffereth them to fall into Poverty and Contempt ; but he bleſſeth and prospereth ſuch as carefully follow the Buſineſs of their Profeſſion : for *the diligent Hand maketh rich*. 'Twas when St. *Matthew* was about his Buſineſs, and employ'd in the Affairs of his Calling, that our Saviour took notice of him, and call'd him to be his Diſciple. So that by keeping to the Duties of our Calling, we keep in God's way, and may expect his Favour and Bleſſing. And this will lead me to conſider,

Secondly, St. *Matthew's* Trade or Profeſſion before he was call'd to be an Apoſtle : and that was the Profeſſion of a *Publican* or Toll-Gatherer, ſignify'd here by *ſitting at the Receit of Cuſtom*. His buſineſs was to gather the Tribute and Cuſtoms due to the *Roman* Emperors ; an Office ſome time of great Repute and Credit, and confer'd only on *Roman* Knights or Perſons of Quality ; but afterwards, by reaſon of the great Exactions and Oppreſſions uſed in it, it became vile and infamous : the Perſons employ'd in it were odious to the People, rank'd with Sinners and the worſt of Men, ſhun'd by all as the Peſts of a Country, and unfit for human Society and Converſation.

This was St. *Matthew's* Trade and Profeſſion, and yet our Saviour made choice of him to be one of his Diſciples and Followers : to ſhew, that there is no Profeſſion or Courſe of Life ſo bad and deſpicable, as to exclude Men from the Grace and Favour of the Goſpel. We ſee St. *Matthew* here, one of the chief of the *Publicans*, to become one of the principal of the Apoſtles ; and he who had drove on a Trade of Oppreſſion and Injuſtice, is yet made an Object of Divine Goodneſs and Mercy. *Zaccheus* alſo, another of the ſame Profeſſion, who had grinded the People by all the Arts and Methods of Extortion, and had a long time traded in the Ways and Wages of Unrighteouſneſs, had the Favour of our Saviour's coming to his Houſe, and bringing Salvation with him home to his own door. Let none then deſpair of finding Mercy at God's hands, that find themſelves willing to come to him : we ſee here a Door of Hope is open'd for all that will enter in and receive it, and the Arms of Mercy are ready to embrace the greateſt Sinners. From the Perſons call'd, I proceed,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, To the Way and Manner of calling them; and that is contain'd in these words, *Jesus saith unto them, Follow me.* This was the constant Form used by our Saviour in calling his Disciples; for when he singled out any to be his Servants or Scholars, he did it in these words, *Follow me.* The Import of which Phrase was, that they should sequester themselves from the Encumbrances of the World, to attend his Person, to hear his Doctrine, and to be Eye-witnesses of his Miracles; and that because they were not only to learn and believe these things themselves, but to teach and instruct others in them, and to confirm their Faith in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. And the better to attend these great things, he wills them to quit all other Employments, and to follow him. By this Form he likewise call'd the other Disciples; for as *Matthew* here, so *Andrew* and *Peter*, the two Sons of *Zebedee*, *James* and *John*, were elsewhere bid to leave all and follow him: and the rest were call'd by the same Form.

But what Influence or Success had our Saviour's Command upon those that were thus call'd by him? Why, the Answer to that will lead us to consider,

Lastly, The Readiness of their Obedience, in resigning up themselves at his Call: for of *St. Matthew* 'tis here said, that *he arose and follow'd him*; and of the rest *St. Luke* tells us, that *they left all and follow'd him.* They delay'd not the Time, nor disputed the Equity or Reasonableness of his Command, but presently obey'd and gave themselves up to him. *St. Matthew* without any ado quitted his *Publican's* Stall, and rose from the Receit of Custom, where he was sitting: and tho he was then engag'd in a very rich and gainful Employment, the Sea of *Galilee* bringing in the Wealth of the World into his Lap; yet in the midst of this great Affluence and Plenty he renounc'd all, and became a Follower of the Blessed Jesus. *St. Peter*, *James*, and *John* were mending their Nets, and about to cast them into the Sea for a Draught, when Christ call'd them; who telling them that he had other work for them, that they should fish for better Game, and from henceforth should catch Men, they immediately flung up all, and follow'd him.

I know *Porphyry* and *Julian*, two great Enemies of Christianity, condemn this as a rash and indiscreet thing in them,

them, so hastily to follow any one that call'd them : and indeed so it had, if our Saviour had been no more than a common Person ; but being a Teacher come from God, an extraordinary Person that brought Salvation with him, as by his Doctrine and Miracles plainly appear'd, of which they living in *Capernaum* were Eye and Ear-witnesses ; it had been Folly to delay the time, and Wisdom to make all haste to come to him, being so well prepar'd to receive the Impression of his Call.

And this was the more remarkable in St. *Matthew*, the Saint of this Day, because he had a very rich and gainful Employment, by which Wealth flow'd into him in a full Tide ; and yet he exchange'd all this for Poverty and Hardship, quitting his House and all that was dear to him in the World, to attend upon one that had not where to lay his Head. And yet he was no Loser, but a great Gainer by the bargain ; for he parted with the perishing things of this Life, for a much more enduring Substance in Heaven, and in effect only exchange'd a few specious Trifles for a far more precious Treasure. For this reason he cheerfully obey'd our Saviour's Call, and diligently attended his Person, to hear his Sermons, and see his Works : neither was he discourag'd by the mean Circumstances of his Appearance, for he plainly discern'd Majesty under the Mantle of his Meanness, and discover'd his Divinity through the Veil of his Humility.

And therefore to his Readiness in following of Christ, he added his Constancy and Perseverance in keeping with him : he never left his Saviour, for whom he had left all things else, but continu'd with him to the last ; he follow'd him in Bonds and Imprisonment, and all manner of Sufferings, till he arriv'd at last to the Crown of Martyrdom.

And as St. *Matthew* was thus forward and constant in following of Christ, so was he frequent and diligent in bringing more Disciples to him. True Vertue and Goodness is evermore diffusive, and willing to propagate and communicate it self to others : Christ's Command to his Disciples was, that being *being converted themselves*, they should *strengthen their Brethren* ; meaning, that they should promote his Honour, to whom they had so happily given up themselves. Accordingly we read of St. *Andrew*, that when he had seen the Messiah, he immediately ran and brought *Peter* to him : and *Philip* being call'd, presently goes and finds out *Nathaniel*, who likewise became one of his

his Disciples. In like manner, *St. Matthew*, the Saint of this Day, was not content to be happy alone ; but having himself receiv'd so great Satisfaction in the Society and Doctrine of our Saviour, was willing that others too should partake of the Advantages of both.

To which end, he in honour of his Master made a great Feast, at which he desir'd his Presence and Company ; inviting likewise some of his Friends, especially those of his own Profession of *Publicans* ; hoping by our Saviour's Discourse and Company to win them over to be his Disciples. At this Feast, *Jesus came, and as he sat at meat in the House, behold many Publicans and Sinners came and sat down with him and his Disciples.* Our Saviour being easy, and freely conversing with them, the *Pharisees*, whose Eyes were evil because another's were good, began to take exception, upbraiding his Disciples with this Freedom ; saying unto them, *Why eateth your Master with Publicans and Sinners ?* *St. Luke* adds, that *the Scribes and Pharisees murmured against him, saying, This Man receiveth Sinners, and eateth with them ;* Luke 15. 2. The *Publicans* (as I before observ'd) were a sort of Persons infamous to a Proverb ; their great Exactions and Oppressions made them hated of all Men, and being generally Heathens, it was forbidden by the Jewish Law to eat or converse with them : which made our Saviour describe a despicable forlorn Person by the name of a *Heathen Man* and a *Publican*, *Mat.* 18. 17. The *Pharisees* therefore would not come near them, and took great offence at our Saviour's sitting at meat with them ; suggesting to his Disciples, that it was no way becoming so holy a Person, as their Master pretended to be, to converse thus freely and familiarly with the worst of Men : They expected a *Messias*, that should keep at a greater distance from Sinners, and maintain the Dignity of his Office, by sequestering himself from the bad Men of the World ; so that when they saw Christ to act otherwise, and make himself so familiar with them, instead of receiving him as a Saviour, they rejected him as an Impostor ; calling him a *Glutton and Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners, a Companion and Favourer of loose and vile Persons.*

Now in answer to this, it follows, *When Jesus heard that, he said unto them, they that be whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick :* meaning, that his Company was most sutable and necessary, where the Wants and Maladies

ladies of Mens Souls do mostly call for it: That the *Publicans* and Sinners were the sick Persons, that stood in need of a Physician to heal the Maladies of their Soul; whereas the more healthy and sound Christians do not so much require it: So that they might as well blame the Physician of the Body for visiting Hospitals and sick Patients, where his Presence is most wanted, as blame our Saviour, the true Physician of the Soul, for visiting those that labour'd under more spiritual and dangerous Distempers, where his spiritual Medicines and Applications are most requir'd. And this was the sole End and Design of Christ's accompanying with these Men, *viz.* to cure the Diseases of their Souls, and to bring them to Repentance and Salvation. He did not converse with them to harden them in their Sins, but to reclaim them from them, and to let them see the Error of their Ways: He was so far from approving the Exactions of the *Pharisees*, that he exacted Reformation and Amendment from them; and instead of encouraging, reprehended and reform'd the Vices of Sinners; as the Examples of *Matthew*, *Zaccheus*, and others plainly testify. By which it appears, that our Saviour herein acted the part of a Friend and a Physician for the Cure and Recovery of Sinners, which could not be without conversing with them.

Moreover, in answer to this Objection, he bids them *go and learn what that meaneth, I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice.* The words are quoted out of *Hosea* 6.6. where God himself prefers the Acts of Mercy and Charity, especially in reclaiming Sinners, and doing Good to Mens Souls, before all ritual Observances, and the nice Rules of Conversation. The not accompanying with Heathens, and eating with Sinners, was but a Ceremonial Precept, to avoid evil Manners and Contagion from them, which was to give place to Justice and Mercy, the weightier Matters of the Law, especially where there was no danger of Infection from them, but a Prospect of doing much Good to their Souls: And this was the Case of our Saviour's conversing with *Publicans* and Sinners; it was not possible for him to receive the least harm from them, being above the Power of Temptation; but it was probable they might receive much Good from him by the Assistance of his Grace and Direction: and therefore he wills them to study this Point well, and then they would see little reason of excepting against this Freedom of his Conversation.

Lastly,

Lastly, he tells them, that *he came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*: that is, he sought not to make Disciples of such as look'd upon themselves as Saints, and were conceited of their own Righteousness like themselves, for such proud and self-opinionated Persons were incapable of learning any Good of him; but his Business was with those that look'd upon themselves as Sinners, that is, such humble, modest, and self-condemn'd Offenders, as were sensible of their Faults, and willing to amend them. He came to seek and to save them that were lost, that were weary and heavy laden with the Burden of their Sins, and reckon'd themselves lost and undone, without being eas'd and rid of it. These were the Persons he call'd and convers'd with, in order to their Repentance and Reformation, who would be sooner reclaim'd than such as boast of their Righteousness, and think themselves good enough already; which sufficiently justifies our Saviour's conversing with *Publicans* and Sinners, rather than with the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*.

This is briefly the Substance of the Gospel for this Day, which may teach us many good Lessons; as,

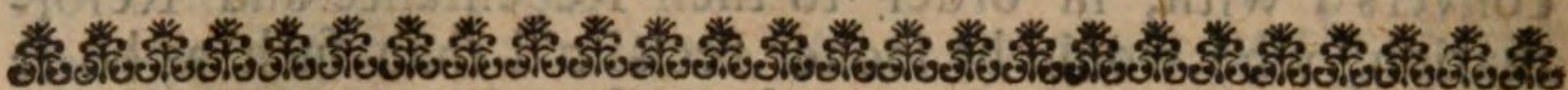
1. From St. *Matthew's* leaving his gainful Trade to follow our Saviour, we may learn the great Duty of Self-denial and Contempt of this World. This is the first Lesson to be learnt in Christ's School, *If any will be my Disciple, let him deny himself* (saith our Saviour) *and take up his Cross, and follow me*. This is the first Step to be made in Christianity, and will lead us on to all the rest; but if we boggle at this, we stumble at the Threshold, and desert our Saviour at the first setting out: *He that leaves not Father and Mother, and all that he hath for my sake* (saith Christ) *is not worthy of me*; and if we are not worthy of him, we shall be accounted unworthy to receive any Mercy or Favour from him: which should wean and unglue our Affections more from this World, and fix them chiefly upon the things of a better.

2. Christ's Freedom of Conversation with *Publicans* and Sinners, teaches us Humanity and Affability with all Men: *Learn of me* (saith he) *for I am meek and lowly in Heart*. There was nothing crabbed or austere in him, but he shew'd himself marvelously free and conversable with all Mankind; from whose Example we are directed to go and

do

do likewise, to be courteous and obliging to all ; and not to decline the civil Society of any, especially where there may be any likelihood of doing Good. We are indeed to avoid the Vices, but not the Persons of Men ; and to shew our Hatred to the former, the better to discover our Love to the latter.

Lastly, We learn from this Discourse, that there is Mercy for the greatest Sinners, if they turn unto God, and become obedient to the Call of our Saviour ; which is a-bundant Encouragement to leave all and follow him, who leads his Followers to eternal Life : To which God of his Mercy bring us all. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XXIX.

The EPISTLE for St. Michael and all Angels.

Rev. xii. 7—13.

There was War in Heaven: Michael and his Angels fought against the Dragon ; and the Dragon fought and his Angels, and prevail'd not, neither was their Place any more found in Heaven. And the great Dragon was cast out, that old Serpent call'd the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole World, &c.

THE Festival we celebrate this Day, is that of St. Michael and all Angels ; a Festival of great Note and Antiquity in the Christian Church.

The Collect for the Day minds us of God Almighty's ordaining and constituting the Services of Angels and Men in a wonderful Order ; and from thence teaches us to pray, that as the Holy Angels always do God service in Heaven ; so by his Appointment, they may succour and defend us on Earth, thro Jesus Christ our Lord. Where we not only contemplate the Order and Excellencies of the holy Angels, but likewise commemorate the Service they do to
God

God in Heaven, and the Succour they afford to Men on Earth.

The Epistle for the Day, of which we are now to treat, tells us of *a War in Heaven*, wherein *Michael* and his Angels fought against the Dragon and his Angels. Where we are to enquire,

First, Who we are to understand by *Michael* and his Angels.

Secondly, Who by the Dragon and his Angels. And,

Thirdly, What was the Fight and Contest between them, together with the Issue and Event of the Battel. For the

First, Some by *Michael* understand one of the chief Princes that presided over the *Jewish Nation*, mention'd by *Daniel*, chap. 10. 13. where when the Prince of *Persia* withstood *Daniel* for one and twenty days, 'tis said, that *Michael* one of the chief Princes came to help him: and, ver. 21. he is call'd a *Prince*, that had the Power and Command of others; and, chap. 12. 1. he is call'd *the great Prince that delivers Israel*. Some, with probability enough, think this *Michael* to be the Son of God, for so the name *Michael* signifies in *Hebrew*, one that is *as God*, or *like unto God*; which cannot be so properly affirm'd of any as of the Son of God. He is sometimes call'd *Michael the Archangel*, Jude 9. having all created Angels under him, who are all commanded to *worship him*; Heb. 1. 6. So that by *Michael* here is meant Christ, the Head of the Angels, the Governor and Defender of his Church, as may be gather'd from sundry Places of Scripture. By his Angels we are to understand the Pastors and Ministers of his Word, who are sent as his Messengers and Ambassadors, and employ'd as celestial Spirits by and under him.

But who is meant by the Dragon and his Angels? By the Dragon here is meant the Devil, who for his Fierceness and bloody Cruelty against the Saints, is stil'd the Great and the Red Dragon; the following words call him *the old Serpent, the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole World*, as he did by beguiling our first Parents. St. Peter calls him *a roaring Lion, going to and fro, seeking whom he may devour*; and here he is stil'd, *the old Serpent, going about seeking whom he may deceive*. His Angels are the evil Instruments and Emissaries of Satan, employ'd by
and

and acting under him for that purpose. Hence we read of the *Place of Dragons*, Psal. 44. 19. which is said to be *prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels*, Mat. 25. These were the Combatants.

But what was the Fight or Contest between them? Why, that in general was some Struggle or Conflict between Christ and the Devil, about the Rule and Government of the World, or the Sovereignty over Mens Hearts, which the Devil had for some time exercis'd over the *Gentile World*. And the Issue or Event of this Contest was, that the Dragon and his Angels *prevail'd not, neither was their Place found any more in Heaven; but the great Dragon was cast out into the Earth, the Place of Dragons, and his Angels were cast out with him*: meaning, that the old Serpent, call'd the Devil and Satan, which had a long time deceiv'd the World, was with his whole Train of Emissaries dethron'd, and his usurp'd Power and Kingdom utterly destroy'd: And that *Michael* and his Angels prevail'd, to the erecting and exalting of Christ's Kingdom in its stead. And this is that Kingdom of Heaven so often mention'd in the Gospel, which we pray may come and be propagated in the World, consisting of the Kingdom of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter.

Of this signal Victory of the Christian Church by the Ministry of Angels, over the Power and Malice of the Devil, we find frequent mention in Holy Scripture. Our Saviour told his Disciples, that *he beheld Satan as Lightning fall from Heaven*; Luke 10. 18. meaning, that he saw his Power vanish away like a Flash of Lightning, which after a short Blaze is suddenly out, and comes to nothing. And in *John* 12. 31. we read, that God by a Voice from Heaven, which the People took for Thunder, or the Voice of an Angel, declar'd, that *then was the Judgment of this World, when the Prince of this World should be cast out*: meaning, that then was an end put to the Devil's Usurpation; that his Kingdom of Darkness was dissolv'd, and that his Power and Dominion should be no more.

This was the happy End or Issue of this War in Heaven, between *Michael* and his Angels, and the Dragon and his; whereby our blessed Saviour gain'd such an absolute Victory and Conquest over Sin and Satan, as enabled him and all his Followers to triumph over Death and Hell, over *Principalities and Powers, over the Rulers of the Darkness of this World,*

World, and spiritual Wickednesses in high Places : 1 Cor. 15. 55. Col. 2. 15.

But to what particular Time or Action does this heavenly Combat seem most probably to refer? Why, of that there are various Conjectures among learned Men; as,

1. Some refer it to the Contest that happen'd at *Rome* between *St. Peter* and *Simon Magus*, wherein *St. Peter*, as Christ's Agent, prevail'd against the Enchantments of *Simon Magus*, the Instrument of the Devil. But how to make this a War in Heaven, or a Fight between *Michael* and his Angels, and the Dragon and his Angels, is somewhat hard to conceive. Again,

2. Some refer this to the Opposition made by the Heathen Emperors, as Satan's Emissaries against the Christian Church, for the space of three hundred years; which was after defeated and brought to an end by some of the Emperors becoming Christian. How proper or pertinent this is to the matter in hand, I shall not take upon me to determine.

But there are two more probable Æras or Actions; the one in the Old Testament, the other in the New, to which this Fight between *Michael* and the Dragon may seem more likely to allude. And they are,

(1.) That of *Lucifer's*, and the Apostate Angels Expulsion out of Heaven, *Isa. 14.* where *Lucifer* exalting himself above the Most High, or at least affecting to be like or equal with God, occasion'd as it were a War in Heaven; and 'tis very credible that God should make use of some of his Heavenly Host to drive those from his Mansions of Glory, whose Arrogance had made them the just Objects of his Wrath. To these *St. Jude* refers, *ver. 6.* of his Epistle, saying, *The Angels that kept not their first Estate, but left their own Habitation, he hath reserv'd in everlasting Chains under Darkness, to the Judgment of the last Day.* And *St. Peter*, to the same purpose, *God spar'd not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, and deliver'd them into Chains and Darkness to be reserv'd unto Judgment : 2 Pet. 2. 4.*

(2.) The other Place to which this War between *Michael* and the Dragon may seem to allude, is that of Christ's Combat with the Devil, mention'd in *Mat. 4.* where the Devil sat upon him in the Solitude of a Wilderness, with all the Fury and Subtlety of his Temptations; but was manfully repuls'd and foil'd by him by the written Word of God,

God, and the Sword of the Spirit ; insomuch that the Devil left him, and the good Angel came and ministred unto him.

But what was that *Contention or Dispute* that Michael the Archangel was said to have with the Devil about the Body of Moses, mention'd by St. Jude, ver. 9. wherein he brought no railing Accusation, but said only, *the Lord rebuke thee ?* Why, that was, as some think, about preserving the Temple and the Service of the Jewish Church, figuratively stil'd, *the Body of Moses*, as the Christian Church is *the Body of Christ*. In which Dispute he is said to use no opprobrious and reviling Language, even to the Devil himself, but only *the Lord rebuke thee ;* which may teach us, in all Controversies about Religion, to avoid all bitter and railing Reflections.

Others again take the Body of *Moses* literally, and make the Dispute between *Michael* and the Devil to be about hiding and interring his Body, that the Devil might not draw any into Idolatry by worshipping his Relicks. But however that be, most certain it is, that *Michael*, the Angel of Light, prevail'd over the Dragon, and all the Powers of Darkness ; signifying to us, that Christ hath vanquish'd Satan, and rescu'd his Followers from the Power and Malice of the Devil and his Angels ; insomuch that tho they may tempt, assault, and accuse them, yet they can do them no harm, without their own Consent and Compliance with them. This is briefly the Victory obtain'd by Christ over Satan and all our Ghostly Enemies, the First Part of the Epistle for this Day.

The Second contains the Confirmation of this Victory, with the blessed Fruits and Effects of it ; as also the Comfort it affords to the Godly, and the Terror to the Wicked : Of which briefly. And,

1. This Victory is confirm'd by a Voice in or from Heaven ; so the next words tell us, *I heard a loud Voice, saying, in Heaven, &c.* signifying the great Joy that was among the Saints and Angels in Heaven upon this great Victory : And being heard by St. John, it must likewise sound from Heaven, and both yield abundant Confirmation of the Truth of it. A Voice in or from Heaven, proceeding from the Mouth of God, or his Messengers the holy Angels, must carry with it the most certain and infallible Evidence ; and there can be no doubt of a Truth thus deliver'd and confirm'd.

But

But what did this Voice deliver? Why, the joyful Words that follow; *Now is come Salvation and Strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the Power of his Christ; for the Accuser of our Brethren is cast down, which accus'd them before God day and night:* that is, upon Christ's Conquest and Triumph over Satan and his evil Spirits, Salvation and Strength is come to his Church and People. Now they are out of the reach of his Power, above the danger of his Assaults, and freed from the Sting and Venom of his Temptations: He who was once the *God of this World, the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that rul'd in the Children of Disobedience,* is now disarm'd and dethron'd, and can no more harm us than a dead Lion or a painted Serpent.

And as this Voice in Heaven publish'd *Salvation and Strength* to Mankind, so did it declare the Kingdom of God, and the Power of Christ; saying, *Now is come the Kingdom of our God, and the Power of his Christ:* not that God had not a Kingdom before, for that was from everlasting; but it then became more visible, and Christ's Power, which was infinite and before all Time, was then made more manifest and apparent to the World, according to that of the Psalmist, *Thou hast prepar'd thy Throne in the Heavens, and thy Kingdom ruleth over all.* All which is now evident, because *the Accuser of our Brethren is cast down, which accus'd them before our God day and night.* The Devil hath his Name from a Calumniator, and Satan is here stil'd, *The Accuser of the Brethren,* because he trades in Lyes and false Accusations, and is ever ready maliciously to charge and slander the Servants of God: He was a Lyar and Slanderer from the beginning, and the Father of them: He deceiv'd our first Parents by his Lyes, and robb'd them of their Innocence by his false Suggestions; *Gen. 3. 5, 10.* He falsly accus'd Job before God, as if all the Service he paid him was merely mercenary, and proceeded only from Interest and By-ends: *Does Job (saith he) serve God for nought? Hast thou not made a Hedg about him, and all that he hath, blessing the Works of his Hand, and increasing his Substance in the Land? But put forth thine Hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy Face.* To prove him a Lyar, God Almighty permitted him to try the Experiment, by touching all that he had, and letting loose the *Chaldeans and Sabeans* upon him to spoil all his Substance. In all which he

preserv'd his Integrity, never murmuring or charging God foolishly, but patient and thankful under all; and instead of cursing, blessed God in his Afflictions as well as Prosperity. In like manner, when *Joshua the High-Priest stood before the Angel of the Lord, Satan was found standing at his right Hand to resist him*; Zech. 3. 1. Our Saviour told St. Peter, that *Satan desir'd to sift him as Wheat*; Luke 22. 31. And tho *Michael*, in disputing with him, brought no railing Accusation, yet he is ever bringing all the railing Accusations he can against the People of God; which may acquaint us with the Forwardness as well as Falseness of his Accusations. But Thanks be to God, *this Accuser of the Brethren is now cast down*, nor can his Accusations come up against us to do us any harm; his Mouth is stopp'd, and we may insult over him in the words of the Apostle, *Who shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?* Rom. 8. 33, 34. He who ceas'd not to accuse Day and Night, is now put to eternal Silence, and the Sound of his Accusations drown'd by the louder and sweeter Voice of Christ's Blood; for so the next words tell us, *They overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb*. This Victory over the Devil and his Angels, was obtain'd for us by the Death of the Son of God, who being *the Lamb slain*, in God's Decree, *before the Foundation of the World*, and in time offer'd up as a Ransom for Mankind, hath thereby *taken away the Sins of the World*; and having by that means satisfy'd all the Demands of Divine Justice against us, none can lay any thing to our Charge, that is not fully satisfy'd by that all-sufficient Sacrifice.

And this is confirm'd to us by *the Word of God, and the Testimony of those, who lov'd not their Lives unto the Death*. Christ and his Apostles, who reveal'd these things to us, have seal'd the Truth of them with their Blood, and laid down their Lives, to give us the full Assurance of them. So St. Paul tells us, that *they counted not their Lives dear to them, but deliver'd themselves up unto Death for Jesus sake, to testify the Truth of the Gospel*: Acts 20. 24. & 2 Cor. 4. 11. which should teach us to persevere in the Belief and Confession of it to our Lives end.

This, in the close of the Epistle, is made matter of Joy to the Inhabitants of Heaven, and to all good Men that remain upon Earth, who are call'd upon to rejoice in it; saying, *Rejoice therefore, rejoice ye Heavens, and all that dwell in*

in them; for the Devil, with all the Apostate Crew of evil Spirits, are cast out of Heaven, and shall not hurt you upon Earth, if you consent not, nor comply with them: Resist the Devil (saith the Apostle) and he will flee from you. Withstand his Temptations, and he shall not prevail against you; do but keep your Ground, and you may be sure to win the Field: for neither Angels nor Men, nor Principalities nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor Heighth, nor Depth, nor any other Creature shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus: Rom. 8. 38, 39.

But woe to the Inhabitants of the Earth, and of the Sea, who yield up themselves to his Power, and are overcome by his Temptations; for the Devil is come down unto them, to keep them his Vassals as long as he can, having great Wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. Sentence being pass'd upon him, he seeks to draw others into the same Condemnation, and to secure those whom he hath gotten into his Snare; and his Rage is the greater, because his Reign is the shorter. His Time is limited, beyond which he cannot pass; he is held as it were in Chains, and bound over to the Judgment of the last Day: In the mean time his Malice is great against the Church, and he seeks to execute his Rage to the utmost against Christ's Kingdom, because the time is hastening, when he is to be for ever shut up in Hell.

Thus we see the End and Issue of this Combat between Michael and the Dragon, or between Christ and Satan, with the Agents and Instruments of each: In which we are to bless God for the Victory he hath given us over the Devil, and beating down Satan under our Feet; so that we are rescu'd from his Power, and arm'd against his Wiles and Temptations. Satan's Kingdom is broken, and the Kingdom of Christ is come upon us: To which therefore let us yield up our selves willing and faithful Subjects, by a chearful and constant Obedience to his Laws; so shall we e'er long be translated from his Kingdom of Grace here, to his Kingdom of Glory hereafter.



DISCOURSE XXX.

The GOSPEL for St. Michael and all Angels.

St. Mat. xviii. 1—10.

At the same time came the Disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? And Jesus call'd a little Child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, &c. Take heed that ye despise not one of these Little Ones; for I say unto you, that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of my Father which is in Heaven.

THIS Gospel for the Day contains chiefly these three things:

First, Our Saviour's advising his Disciples to Humility, and not to affect any worldly Greatness; from the 1st to the 6th Verse.

Secondly, His cautioning them not to offend any of his Little Ones that believe in him; from the 6th to the 9th Verse.

Thirdly, A Reason given against offending or despising of them, from the care that is taken of them by the Holy Angels; ver. 10. For the

First, The Disciples, upon Christ's mentioning his Resurrection, began to think of worldly Honours and Preferments to be had in his Kingdom, and so came to him at that time with this Question, saying, *Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?* Our Saviour perceiving what their Minds chiefly ran upon, and the vain Expectations they had

had from him, call'd a little Child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, *Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Where he in effect bids them to behold the Innocence and Simplicity of the little Child set before them, and by that Emblem learn to have no more Thoughts or Desires of any earthly Greatness, than that harmless Babe, who had no notion of or regard to such Matters; and unless they chang'd their Minds and Inclinations, and became as unconcern'd in these things as little Children are wont to be, they could never be his Disciples, nor receive any Benefit by him; for he came not to promote them to any Dignities or Pre-eminences here in this World, but to prepare them for the Glories and Happiness of the World to come: *Whosoever therefore (saith he) shall humble himself as this little Child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven; and whoso shall receive one such little Child in my Name, receiveth me.* Where our Saviour measures all true Greatness, not by the outward height of any worldly Pomp or Preferment, but by the inward Lowliness and Humility of the Mind: And this he did to wean his Followers from this World, to keep them from *minding too much earthly things*, and to raise *their Affections to the things above*; knowing, that how little or low soever they may be in their Substance and Condition here, they shall be reckon'd the greatest hereafter in the Kingdom of Heaven.

And because such humble, meek, and self-denying Persons are apt to be despis'd and look'd upon as mean abject Persons in the eyes of the World, our Saviour adds, *that whosoever shall receive such Little Ones in my Name, receiveth me*: meaning, that all the Honour or Favour shew'd to them for his sake, will be accounted as done to himself; and all the Contempt offer'd to them, will be reckon'd as done to his own Person. And this will lead,

Secondly, To the Caution here given against the offending one of these Little Ones; *Whoso shall offend one of these Little Ones which believe in me (saith our Saviour) it were better for him that a Millstone were hang'd about his Neck, and that he were drown'd in the Depth of the Sea.* Where we may observe both the Sin and the Punishment.

The Sin is the offending one of the Little Ones that believe in Christ: By whom we are to understand those

young tender Converts that had newly embrac'd the Christian Faith ; or those humble, meek, and lowly Disciples of Christ before-mention'd, who imitate the Modesty, Simplicity, and Docility of little Children, having no ambitious Aims after earthly Greatness, but *laying aside all Malice, and all Guile, and Hypocrisy, and Envy, and Evil-speaking, as new-born Babes desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby.* These are the Little Ones that we are to be very tender of offending. By which we are to understand,

1. All grieving, troubling, or disquieting of them, which is a great Offence or Unkindness done to any ; for *by Sorrow of Heart* (saith Solomon) *the Spirits are broken* : and therefore good Men seek to prevent Trouble, and promote the Ease, Joy, and Comfort of one another ; 'tis the evil and wicked Spirits only that disturb the Rest and Peace of Mankind, and delight in troubling of any : which we are carefully to avoid to Christ's Little Ones.

2. By offending of them, is sometimes meant the despising or contemning of them ; so 'tis understood in this Chapter, *Take heed that ye despise not one of these Little Ones* ; ver. 10. that is, let not the Modesty and Humility of Christ's Disciples sink your Esteem of them, or make you set them at nought as vile and abject Persons ; but rather set the greater Price and Value upon them, and let them rise the higher in your Opinion, by how much the lower they are in their own : for so God Almighty rates and values Persons, not by the Height, but by the Lowliness of their Mind ; he hath Respect to the Humble and Meek, but beholdeth the Proud afar off.

3. Offending is mostly taken in Scripture for laying a Stumbling-Block in the way of another, at which he may stumble and fall, and so signifies the ministring or giving occasion of sinning to others by Word or Deed. In this Sense the Apostle speaks of some Mens *eating with Offence*, by occasioning their falling into Sin, and wills Men *not to eat Flesh, or any thing whereby their Brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak* ; Rom. 14. 20, 21. And in the Epistle to the Corinthians, he advises them *to give no Offence to the Church of God*, but to abstain from every thing *that may make their Brother to offend* ; 1 Cor. 8. 13. So that to offend one of these Little Ones, is to say or do any thing, which may, as a Stone in the way, trip up their Heels, or make them fall, by casting in some Lett or Hindrance

to discourage them from their Duty, or throwing in some Bait or Allurement to draw them into Sin. To give an occasion of falling into either of these things, by any Advice, Encouragement, or Example, is to offend Christ's Little Ones, the thing here caution'd against, and that with a severe Threatning and Penalty; for whoſo thus offends one of Chriſt's Little Ones, *it were better for him that a Millſtone were hang'd about his Neck, and he caſt into the Sea:* Which Expreſſion is not to be taken literally, it being impoſſible that a Millſtone ſhould be hang'd about any Man's Neck; but in a comparative and hyperbolical Senſe, to ſignify the heavy and intolerable Load of God's Diſpleaſure againſt ſuch Offenders, which will as certainly and inevitably ſink them into the Gulph of Perdition, as if they were preſs'd down to the bottom of the Sea by the ponderous Weight of a Millſtone; and that they might eaſier bear up under the Burden of this, than under the Weight of the other.

From whence our Saviour takes occaſion, in the next words, to denounce *a Woe unto the World* *because of Offences*: that is, for the great Encouragements they give unto the Wicked, and the many Stumbling-Blocks they lay in the way of the Righteous, whereby they draw Men into Sin *as with a Cart-Rope*, and *lead them into Iniquity by the Cords of Vanity*, as the Prophet expreſſes it, *Iſa. 5. 18.* for by this means *it muſt be that Offences come*: which Neceſſity proceeds not from the nature of the things, as if they could not be avoided, but from the Corruption of Mens Natures, that unhappily tends and leads to them. The Malice, Pride, Inconſtancy, and corrupt Deſigns of too many, will neceſſarily occaſion ſuch Offences, and the Providence of God permits them for the Trial of good, and the Punishment of bad Men; but yet *woe be to them by whom the Offence cometh*: for this will not excuſe, but aggravate the Crime and Condemnation of thoſe, who ſhall be found the Inſtruments and Authors of ſuch Offences.

Wherefore (ſaith our Saviour) *if thy Hand offend thee*, by touching any unclean thing, or fingering any unjuſt Gain; *or if thy Foot offend thee*, by walking in any forbidden Ways, or treading unlawful Paths; *cut them off, and caſt them from thee*: *or if thine Eye offend thee*, by wanton Looks or laſcivious Glances, becoming thereby the Windows of Luſt, or the Inlets of Uncleanneſs, *Πόρνας ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς*

ov ἔχων, having Eyes full of Adultery; pluck them out, and cast them from thee: for it is better for thee to enter into Life halt and maimed, and with one Eye, than having two Hands, or two Feet, or two Eyes, to be cast into Hell-fire. If any Member of thy Body, instead of being an Instrument of Righteousness unto Holiness, become an Instrument of Sin, or an Occasion of Falling; or if (as the Words figuratively import) any darling or beloved Vice hath gotten the mastery of thee, and so easily beset thee, as to become thine own Iniquity, tho it may be as dear to thee as a Right Hand or a Right Eye, yet rid thy self of it by Excision or Repentance: it being far more desirable to enter the Regions of Purity and Perfection with maim'd and mortify'd Members, where all Defects will be supply'd, and all the Parts advanc'd to endless and compleat Happiness, than to be cast whole and intire into everlasting Fire, there to be tormented for ever with the Devil and his Angels.

After this, our Saviour renews again his former Caution, saying, *Take heed that ye despise not one of these Little Ones.* Think not meanly of them as abject Persons, nor look down with Scorn and Contempt upon them, as unworthy of your Care or Consideration; but rather set a high value and esteem upon them, doing them all the Good, and keeping off all the Evil ye can from them.

And that for a good reason added in the Close; *For I say unto you, that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of my Father, which is in Heaven:* that is, how little or low soever these young Believers may be, in their own or the World's account, yet are they honour'd by God with the Ministry and Guardianship of his holy Angels, who wait in his presence, and continually attend his Throne.

Now because 'twas for these Words that this Portion of Scripture was selected for the Gospel of this Day, 'twill be requisite to speak a little the more to them. To which end, I shall inquire,

1st, Into the Nature of Angels.

2^{dly}, Into their Office, in attending upon, and ministering to God's People. And,

3^{dly}, Wherein this their Office and Ministry doth consist. For the

1st, An Angel in general imports no more than a Messenger sent or employ'd about another's Business. But more espe-

especially and eminently an Angel signifies a Heavenly Messenger, or Ambassador sent by God for the Good of Mankind. For their Nature, they are said to be pure Spirits, void of all Corporiety or Matter; but yet so as to be able upon occasion to assume some thin and airy Bodies, and to appear in human Shape: tho some of the antient Fathers and Philosophers have affirm'd them to be made and consist of some of the purest and finest Matter, thinking none but God himself to be a pure and simple Spirit.

That there are such high and noble Creatures of a middle Nature and Entercourse between God and Man, is evident not only from the general Consent and Tradition of the World about it; but from the clear and express Testimony of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament: in both which, we read of their frequent Appearances, to deliver some great and important Messages. And this will lead,

2dly, To the Office and Business of the Angels: And that is,

(1.) To give their immediate Attendance upon the Throne of God, and to be always in his Presence; signify'd here by the *continual beholding the Face of our Heavenly Father*, which is imply'd in their *being continually before him*, 1 Kings 10. 8. And next to that, they are,

(2.) To minister to the Occasions and Necessities of his People, and to be the Guardians of his Children. Hence they are stil'd *ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation*; Hebr. 1. 14. Holy David tells us, that *the Angel of the Lord tarrieth about them that fear him, and delivereth them*; Psal. 34. 7. And to animate his People in all their Distresses and difficult Undertakings, he adds, *He shall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways, they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy Foot against a Stone*; Psal. 91. 11, 12. From these and many other places of Holy Scripture, it hath been the receiv'd Opinion both of Jews and Christians, that every Man, or at least every good Man, had a Guardian Angel appointed him by God, to take especial care of him and his Concerns, both in temporal and spiritual matters. Hence Abraham told his Servant concerning his Son Isaac, that *God would send his Angel before him, and prosper him in all his Ways*; Gen. 24. 7, 40.

In the New Testament we read of St. Peter, that when a Maid told the Disciples, that *Peter was at the door*, they thinking

thinking him to be fast in Prison, said, *It was not him, but his Angel*; Acts 12. 15. which words proceeded from a current Opinion among them of Guardian Angels. And here in the Text our Saviour, speaking of these Little Ones, saith, *Their Angels*, that had the particular Care of them, *still beheld the Face of God*: that is, as a Learned Paraphrast tell us, their Guardian Angels here on Earth have a continual Recourse to the glorious Presence of God in Heaven, and being high in his Favour, have always Access to his Throne, to make Requests or Complaints in their behalf, and to receive his Commands concerning them; which they are ever ready to execute, and therefore are painted with Wings, to represent the Swiftneſs and Activity of their Motion. *Iſa. 6. 2.*

But, 3^{dly}, wherein doth the Ministry of Angels conſiſt? Why,

(1.) In delivering Meſſages from God, and thereby declaring his Mind and Will to his Church: this they did by the Prophets in the Old Teſtament, and by the Apoſtles in the New. Thus an Angel appear'd to *Abraham* and *Lot*, to *Moses*, and the other Prophets, to let them know upon occasion what they ſhould ſay or do. In the Goſpel we find the Birth of *John* the Baptiſt declar'd by an Angel, *Luke 1. 13.* So was the Conception, Birth, and Reſurrection of our Bleſſed Saviour, *ver. 30, 31. & Chap. 2. 10.* Hence the Angels are ſtil'd *God's Meſſengers*, to receive his Errands, and to execute his Will; which they do with great Diligence and Fidelity. To which end, they are ſaid to be endow'd with Knowledg and true Holineſs, call'd therefore the *Holy Angels*.

(2.) Their Miniſtry conſiſts in guarding and defending God's Church and People from all Dangers, ſpiritual and temporal. Hence the Angels are ſaid to *excel in Strength, to do God's Commandments, hearkening to the Voice of his Word*; *Pſal. 103. 20.* They defend both the Bodies and Souls of the Saints, the one from the Malice of their Enemies, the other from the Fury of evil Spirits. We read that God, willing to defend *Jeruſalem* againſt the great Army of the *Aſſyrians* that came againſt it, ſent his Angel that ſmote in one Night 185000 of them in their Camp, who all became dead Corps; *2 Kings 19. 35.* Sometimes the Angels divert the evil Intention of Enemies, ſometimes they forewarn us of the Danger, and remove evil Accidents from us. They are preſent with us and preſide over us in
the

the publick Assemblies, where the Apostle advises to Reverence and a comely Behaviour, *because of the Angels*, 1 Cor. 11. 10. They assist us in the Hour of Death, and convey the Souls of the Saints, as they did *Lazarus's*, into Abraham's Bosom, Luke 16. 22. Finally, they assist at the Resurrection, by re-uniting our Souls and Bodies; and at the Day of Judgment, by instating both into the Regions of Bliss and Immortality.

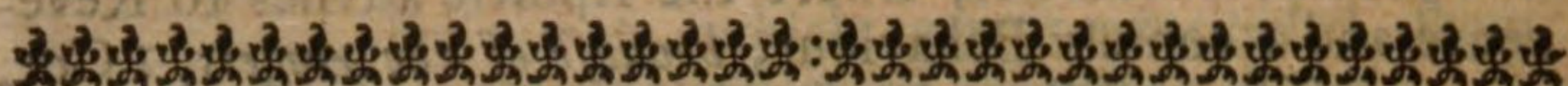
From all which, we may learn to magnify the Wisdom and Goodness of God, in appointing such excellent and glorious Beings to minister to our Salvation; and to be ever blessing and praising of him for the invisible Aid and Protection, we daily receive from them.

Next, We may comfort our selves against all the Power and Malice of the Devil and his evil Instruments, by the continual Assistance we are assur'd of from these good Angels.

Moreover, Let us imitate their Example in serving God with the same Readiness and Zeal here upon Earth, that they do in Heaven, and in condescending to any Service for the Salvation of Mens Souls; not despising any, for whom God takes such care by his holy Angels.

Lastly, Let us secure to us their Ministry now, that we may for ever enjoy their Society hereafter.





DISCOURSE XXXI.

The EPISTLE for St. Luke's Day.

2 Tim. iv. 5—15.

Watch thou in all things, endure Afflictions, do the Work of an Evangelist, make full proof of thy Ministry: for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my Departure is at hand, &c. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present World, and is departed to Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia, only Luke is with me, &c.

THE Saint whose Memory we celebrate this Day, is St. Luke, one of the Sacred Pen-men of the Holy Gospel; who for his Fidelity in writing the Life of our Blessed Saviour, and the Acts of his Holy Apostles, justly deserves to be remember'd in the Annals of the Church; and for the Constancy of his Faith and Friendship to be recommended to all Posterity.

He was born at *Antioch*, a City famous among other things for that honourable Stile and Character that was there given to the Disciples; who were call'd Christians first at Antioch.

In the Collect for the Day he is stiled *Luke the Physician*, whose Praise is in the Gospel; from which Profession he was call'd to be an Evangelist, which at first signify'd in general a Preacher of the Gospel, but was after restrain'd to those four, who wrote the History of the Life and Doctrine of our Saviour. He was likewise call'd from a Physician of the Body to be a *Physician of the Soul*. And from thence our Church teaches us to pray, *that by the wholesom Medicines of the Doctrine deliver'd by him, all the Diseases of our Souls may be healed.*

Beside

Beside his Skill in Physick, he is said to be famous for Painting; and there are some Pieces said to be drawn by his Hand still extant in the World.

For his Religion, he was brought up in that of the Jews, and converted from it, not by the immediate Call of Christ himself, as many of the other Apostles and Evangelists were; but, as he himself tell us, by some *who were from the beginning Eye-witnesses and Ministers of his Word*; Luke 1. 2.

'Tis generally suppos'd, that he was converted by St. Paul during his stay at *Antioch*; after which, he became an inseparable Companion and Fellow-Labourer with him in the Work of the Ministry: especially after the Vision that call'd him into *Macedonia*, where St. Luke attended him, and ever after continu'd with him, as we read, *Acts* 16. 10.

The Epistle for this Day contains St. Paul's Directions to *Timothy* for the faithful Discharge of his Office, to which he was call'd: where he wills him,

1st, To be vigilant and watchful over the Flock committed to his Charge: *Watch thou in all things.* He had before strictly charg'd him, to *preach the Word in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all Long-suffering and Doctrine.* And that because the time was coming, when many would not endure sound Doctrine, but after their own Lusts heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears: the Issue whereof would be the turning away their Ears from the Truth, and turning them unto Fables. To prevent which, he advises him to watch against such false Teachers in all things; to watch against their Doctrine, and against their Designs, against their Errors and Corruptions, and all their Devices.

As a Shepherd seeks to keep off the Wolf, and to secure the Sheep from him; so a faithful Pastor will look warily to his Flock, to defend them from Wolves in Sheeps-Clothing, that come only to deceive and devour them: which made him exhort *Timothy* to keep a strict guard against them. And lest he should be discourag'd by any Dangers or Difficulties he might meet with, he directs him,

2dly, To Patience and Magnanimity in Sufferings, saying, *Endure Afflictions.* These are apt to dishearten and divert Men from the Prosecution of their Designs, and to cool their Zeal even in the best Undertakings: and therefore St. Paul here and elsewhere exhorts his Disciple, to be
strong

strong in the Lord and in the Power of his Might, to endure Hardship as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ, to arm himself against all Trials, and not to faint under any Tribulations.

3dly, The Apostle exhorts him to *do the Work of an Evangelist*. Now the Work of an Evangelist was to be both a Writer and a Preacher of the Gospel: Of the first sort were the four Evangelists, whereof two were Apostles, to wit, *St. Matthew* and *St. John*; the other two, *St. Mark* and *St. Luke*, were properly Evangelists. The Apostles were chiefly employ'd in ruling and governing the Church, *ordaining Elders in it, and setting in order the things that were wanting*; Tit. 1. 5. The Evangelists were Persons sent by them to evangelize or preach the Gospel, to baptize and teach the People to observe all that Christ had commanded; *Mat. 28. 19, 20.* Of this sort was *St. Luke*, the Saint of this Day, whom *St. Paul* sent to preach the Gospel in *Dalmatia* and *Galatia*; and after that in *Italy* and *Macedonia*, where he spared no Pains, nor declined any Dangers in the Work whereunto he was sent. And this is to do the Work of an Evangelist, namely, to discharge the Duty of a true and faithful Minister of Christ. To which end, he farther exhorts *Timothy*,

4thly, To *make full proof of his Ministry*; that is, as he elsewhere explains it, by *shewing himself approved unto God, a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*; 2 Tim. 2. 15. Where he would have him first approve himself unto God, by the Sincerity of his Aims and Intentions; and next unto Men, by the Soundness of his Doctrine and the Integrity of his Life: by both which he would shew himself an able and expert Workman, that could fall under no Blame or Reproof, but rather deserve Praise and Commendation, by rightly dividing the Word of Truth; not handling the Word of God deceitfully, but telling all Men their Duty, and giving to every one their Meat in due season.

And this the Apostle would have him the rather do, because his time here was but short: *For I am now ready to be offered* (saith he) *and the time of my Departure is at hand*: meaning, that he was shortly to be try'd for his Life, and in great danger to fall a Sacrifice to the Rage and Fury of his Persecutors.

However, this (saith he) doth not much dismay me, having the Testimony of a good Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity I have had my Conversation
here

here in this World ; which gives me full Assurance of future Joys and Happiness in another. So he declares in the next words, *I have fought a good Fight, I have finish'd my Course, I have kept the Faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judg shall give me at that day : and not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* The words are Agonistical, and allude to the Prizes fought for and obtain'd in the Olympick Games. The Expression, *I have fought a good Fight*, relates to the Valour and Victories of those Combatants, and signifies the Conflict he had with, and the Conquest he had over his Ghostly Enemies. His saying, *I have finish'd my Course*, refers to their running of Races, and denotes his Perseverance in the Christian Course, and holding out to the end ; whereby he had *run with patience the Race that was set before him.* His *keeping the Faith*, alludes to the observing the Laws of Warfare, and keeping to the Bounds and Limits of the Race ; and signifies to us his keeping to the Rules of the Gospel, and continuing firm and unmovable in the Christian Faith. This the Apostle calls the striving lawfully, saying, *No Man striving for Mastery is crown'd, except he strive lawfully :* And wills us all, *so to run that we may obtain,* 1 Cor. 9. 24, 25. Now he having acquitted himself in all things as a Soldier of Jesus Christ, and finish'd his Course with Joy, *Henceforth* (saith he) *there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness.* Where is a manifest Allusion to the Crown or Prize that was wont to be set up at the end of a Race ; which in those Games was only a corruptible Crown, a Garland of Flowers or Chaplet of Roses, or other such fading things : but we in our Christian Course seek an incorruptible Crown, a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us ; stiled here a Crown of Righteousness, which the Apostle tells us was laid up for him, and that God the Righteous Judg would give him at that day. Where is a farther Reference to the manner of receiving the Reward or Prize in those Races, in which there was a Judg appointed at the end of the Race, to observe who came first to the Goal, and to adjudg the Prize to him, to whom of right it belong'd.

Accordingly the Apostle declares here with great Assurance, that *the Lord the Righteous Judg* would award and give him a Crown of Righteousness at the last Day : and not to me only (saith he) but to all them that love his appearing. Where

Where he shews a difference between the Christian and other Races: for in the *Grecian* Races, tho all run, yet but one receives the Prize; but in this Christian Race the Prize will be adjudg'd to all that hold out faithful to the end; and all will be crown'd, that look and long for his Appearance.

These things *St. Paul* wrote to *Timothy* from *Rome*; where being a Prisoner, he desir'd *Timothy* with all speed to come to him; *Do thy diligence* (saith he) *to come shortly unto me*: being willing either to impart something more of his Mind to him, or to receive some Advice and Consolation from him, before he came to his Trial. And this he would have him do, because many of his Friends had left him in his Troubles; *For Demas hath forsaken me* (saith he) *having loved this present World*. *Demas* had before accompany'd and assisted him in preaching the Gospel, as appears in *Col. 4. 14.* & *Philem. ver. 24.* but now he was gone from him, either for fear of Danger in continuing with him, or from hopes of Gain in leaving of him; or else *he is departed to Thessalonica*, to mind some worldly Affairs. *Crescens is gone to Galatia*, and *Titus to Dalmatia*; so that I am now almost left alone, for *only Luke is with me*: which Words relating to the Saint of this Day, and shewing the Constancy of *St. Luke's* Faith and Friendship, together with his Diligence and Perseverance in the Work of the Ministry, will deserve to be a little more consider'd. And,

First, We may observe here the Constancy of *St. Luke's* Faith; for when *Demas* forsook Christ and *St. Paul*, from an inordinate Love of this present World, *St. Luke* kept firm and stedfast to both: *Only Luke is with me*. Our Saviour had some mercenary Disciples, that follow'd him only for the Loaves: they kept with him while any thing could be gotten by him, but when that fail'd, *they went back, and walked no more with him*; *John 6. 66.* We read of others, that for a while receiv'd his Word with Joy, but when any Tribulation or Persecution arose because of the Word, *by and by they were offended*, *Mat. 13. 41.* These were a sort of nice and delicate Christians, who would follow their Saviour in ways that appear'd easy and pleasant to them; but when once they came to any rugged or miry Path, they left him, and would go no farther with him. The Apostle speaks of some among the *Galatians*, that they began well, and set out right at their Entrance upon the

the Christian Course, with some fair and promising Hopes of their Continuance: *Ye did run well, (saith he) who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the Truth?* They started fair, and ran well for a while, but they soon grew out of breath, and lost the Prize for not holding out to the end of the Race. And we have still too many of such short-breath'd Christians, who seem very zealous by fits and starts, but quickly flag and tire, and in a manner give up all. They can stick to their Religion while the Sun shines, and the World smiles upon it; but when a Storm arises, and their Interest or Safety seem to lie another way, they then wheel about, and care no longer to maintain that, which they think unable to maintain them. This is the Guise and Practice of too many hollow and hypocritical Pretenders to Christianity.

But we are taught other and better things from *St. Luke*, the Saint of this Day, who not only began well, but held out to the last; being neither diverted by the Love, nor discourag'd by the Hatred or Terrors of the World. He never left *St. Paul*, because he saw him resolv'd not to leave our Saviour, and so was a constant Follower of him, as he was of Christ. He was not, with *Demas*, bewitch'd by the Sorceries of the World, nor enchanted by the Charms of earthly Profits or Pleasures; but kept on his Christian Course, as well when beset with Thorns, as when strew'd with Palms and Roses. In a word, he never shrunk or started aside from the Truth, but continu'd with *St. Paul* in the defence of Christianity, when others left it: And to crown all, he cheerfully laid down his Life for the Testimony of the Gospel which he had written.

Secondly, We may observe here not only the Constancy of his Faith, but the Sincerity of his Friendship: for when others forsook *St. Paul* in the Troubles and Calamities that beset him, the Saint of this Day faithfully stuck to him; *Only Luke is with me*. The chief Mark and Property of a true Friend, is not to leave any in the time of Adversity; and Affliction is the best Touchstone to try the Truth and Reality of Friendship: *A true Friend (saith Solomon) will love at all times, and a Brother is born for Adversity*; Prov. 17. 17. Where we have the Constancy of his Affection, he will love at all times; and his Fidelity in time of need, he is born for Adversity. There be many that will follow and stick to us in times of Prosperity, when they can partake of our Joys, and share the Benefit of our good For-

tune; who yet in times of Adversity, when the Tide turns, and our Fortune runs low, will soon leave and forsake us: and such are frequently the Friendships of the World, mutable, mercenary, and uncertain.

Whereas there are but few such faithful Friends, that will stand by or keep with us, when the World frowns upon us, and run the hazards and difficulties of our Misfortunes; yet such a one was *St. Luke*. He continu'd with the Apostle in all his Troubles and Afflictions, in his Trials at *Rome*, and Arraignments at *Jerusalem*, and never deserted him in all his Perils and Persecutions, but constantly attended him, till he had finish'd his Course and receiv'd the Crown of Martyrdom.

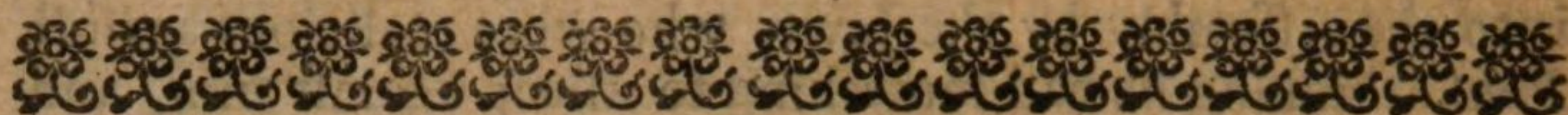
Thirldly, Here is observable not only the Constancy of his Faith and Friendship, but his Diligence in the Work of the Ministry. He continu'd a Fellow-Labourer, as well as a Companion with *St. Paul*, and spared no pains in publishing and propagating the Gospel; in which respect likewise he used these words, *Only Luke is with me*. When others grew cold and remiss in this Work, as *Demas* did, who left it to follow the World, *St. Luke* stuck to his Calling, and abated nothing of his Zeal and Diligence for all the Dangers and Discouragements he met with in it. Having put his Hand to the Plough, he would not look back, but continu'd faithful unto Death, and hath no doubt receiv'd a Crown of Life.

But to go on with the Epistle: *St. Paul* being thus almost left alone, having only *Luke* with him to assist in the Work of the Ministry, sent to *Timothy* with all possible speed to come to him; and to take *Mark*, Kinsman to *Barnabas*, and bring him with him, for he was profitable to him for the Ministry: having some particular Work for him in preaching the Gospel, as he had for *Tychicus*, whom he had already sent to *Ephesus* for that purpose. And in his way to him he would have him call at *Troas*, where he had left some Books and Garments with one *Carpus*, and to bring them with him, but especially the Parchments, which were of some great use and service to him. While the Apostle was at *Troas*, he speaks of one *Alexander a Coppersmith*, who did him much Evil, referring him to the just Judgment of God to reward him according to his Works. What this *Alexander* was, and what Evil he did the Apostle, we may learn from *Acts* 19. 33. where we read, that this *Alexander*, who was a Jew by Birth, but a Christian by Profession,

sion, was seiz'd in a Tumult about *St. Paul*, and brought into the Assembly by the Jews, who were malicious against *Paul*, thinking he had something to alledg against him, and that to excuse himself he would lay all the blame upon *St. Paul*. Accordingly *he beckon'd with his Hand, and would have made his Defence unto the People*; but was hinder'd from it by the Cry and Uproar of the People: he designing to clear himself, and lay the whole fault upon the Apostle; for which *St. Paul* tells us he did him great harm, and therefore excommunicated and *deliver'd him up to Satan, that he might learn not to blaspheme*, 1 Tim. i. 20. of whom, he wills *Timothy* to be aware also, for he hath greatly withstood our words: that is, to look upon him as a Person excommunicate, and avoid him for his contumacious opposing and resisting our Doctrine.

Thus we see the Sense and Substance of the Epistle for this Day, wherein *St. Luke* is represented as a Pattern of Constancy and Perseverance in the Faith, which we ought all to follow; and likewise as an Instance of a true and faithful Friend, in sticking to the Apostle in the times of his greatest Trouble and Trials, which is a Vertue fit for all Men to learn and imitate. And lastly, as an Example of unweary'd Diligence and Fidelity in the Business of his Calling; from which nothing could draw or discourage him: a Lesson worthy of Imitation, and may teach us to go and learn to do likewise.





DISCOURSE XXXII.

The GOSPEL for St. Luke's Day.

St. Luke x. 1—7.

The Lord appointed other Seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face, into every City and Place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The Harvest truly is great, but the Labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that he would send forth Labourers into his Harvest. Go your ways, behold I send you forth, &c.

THE Gospel for this Day gives us some short Account of Christ's sending forth his Disciples into the World, together with the Commission given and granted to them. In which we may observe,

First, The Person sending.

Secondly, The Persons sent.

Thirdly, The Manner of sending them. And,

Fourthly, The Errand upon which they are sent.

First, For the Person sending, that, as the first words of the Gospel tell us, is the Lord; that is, the Lord Christ, who is made Lord of all, to whom God hath given to be Head over all things to his Church, Eph. 1. 22. This Church is sometimes stiled a Kingdom, in which Christ is the King to rule and govern it; sometimes a House or Family, wherein Christ is the Master, to order and dispose all things in it; sometimes a School, wherein he is the Teacher to direct and instruct it. Again, sometimes he is call'd the Captain of our Salvation, to lead and conduct us in the Paths of Life: sometimes the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, to feed them with Knowledg, and guide them

them to eternal Life. And lastly, he is stil'd *the High-Priest of our Profession*, in all things having the Preheminence. So that in all the Instances of Power and Authority, Christ is truly and properly *the Lord*, said here to be the Person sending.

Secondly, For the Persons sent, they are here said to be the *Seventy*, or, as other Copies have it, the seventy two Disciples. *The Lord appointed other Seventy also*: which words imply his sending some before and beside these. And so indeed he did; for when he first enter'd upon his Prophetick Office, of revealing to Mankind the Will of his Father, and instructing them in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, he made choice of twelve Apostles, to serve him in that Office, suitable to the Number of the twelve Patriarchs, who were the appointed Preachers of Righteousness to the old World.

After that, he appointed other Seventy also, agreeable to the like Number of Elders, chosen by *Moses* out of the several Tribes to govern the Congregation of *Israel*; of which we read, *Numb. 11. 16*. Now these Seventy were to be to Christ, as Disciples were wont to be to the Prophets; that is, to go on his Errands as he should appoint them: which they did by turns, going two at once as Harbingers to proclaim his Approach to every City where he design'd to come; for so *he sent them two and two before his face into every City or Place, whither he himself would come*.

But because the Province they were to undertake was large, and the Number of those that were to be employ'd in it was but small; *Therefore said he unto them, The Harvest truly is great, but the Labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that he would send forth Labourers into his Harvest*. Where by the *Harvest*, we are to understand the whole World, which then lay in Wickedness, over-run with Weeds, and overspread with the black and thick Darkness of Error and Ignorance; a great part whereof still sit in the Regions of the Shadow of Death: all which are to be brought into the Barn, that is, to be gather'd into Christ's Church, and enlighten'd with the Knowledg of God.

This Harvest is here said to be *truly great*, extending it self to the Compass of the whole Earth, which is to be *filled with the Knowledg of God, as the Waters cover the Sea*.

By the *Labourers* in this Harvest, we are to understand the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God, who are sent to plant the Gospel in all parts of the barren World, to sow the Seed of God's Word in all places, to scatter the Light of it into all the dark Corners of the Earth, and by all good means to cultivate and bring in the Harvest; that *all Nations may see and partake of the Salvation of God.*

Now *these Labourers* are here said to be few; there being then no more than the twelve Apostles, and the seventy Disciples, for the accomplishing of this great Work, which requires more Heads and Hands to effect it. *Pray ye therefore* (say the next words) *the Lord of the Harvest*, that is, Christ the Head and Governour of the Church, *that he would send more Labourers into his Harvest*; that he would increase the Number of his Ministers according to the Extent and Exigences of all Mankind, who being all to be gather'd into one Flock, and brought into one Fold, there may be no want of Shepherds to call and guide them to it: that as there be many that are ready to receive the Gospel when reveal'd to them, so God would be pleas'd to direct and incline the Hearts of many to undertake this Office, and to preach it to them. And because this may not be done without a Commission, for *how shall they preach* (saith the Apostle) *except they be sent?* Rom. 10. 14. therefore we are here bid to pray the Lord of the Harvest to send and commission them for this Work. This is a matter of the highest Concern and greatest Importance to the whole World, and so justly deserves and calls for our most hearty Prayers: for which, as we have abundant Reason, so have we sufficient Encouragement from God's Promise of *making his Way known upon Earth, and his saving Health unto all Nations.* God the Father promis'd to give his Son the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for his Possession; to bring his Sons from far, and his Daughters from the Ends of the World: that is, to bring them all within the Pales of his Church, and to enlighten them with the Knowledg of Divine Truths; of which we have many Promises extant in Sacred Writ.

Now this is to be done by Ministers or Messengers duly qualify'd and authoriz'd for this purpose, with whom Christ hath promis'd to be present with his Holy Spirit always to the end of the World, and to prosper the Work
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in their hands. And because the Harvest is great and of large extent, we are directed to pray for Labourers to be sent forth in it; which is a matter well worthy of our Prayers and best Endeavours, without which it cannot be brought to pass. And therefore we are bid to pray for *Labourers*, not *Loiterers* in the Harvest; that is, for such as are willing to *labour in the Word and Doctrine, studying to approve themselves unto God, as Workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*: who are therefore to be *accounted worthy of double Honour, and to be highly esteem'd in Love for their Works sake*. These are the Persons sent, from whence I proceed, as the Epistle leads me, to consider,

Thirdly, The Manner of Christ's sending them, together with the Usage or Entertainment they were like to meet with, in the following words: *Go your ways; behold, (saith he) I send you forth as Sheep among Wolves*. Where after his declaring his Mission of them, *Behold, I send you forth*; he lets them know what they were to expect from the World, *viz. to be used as Lambs among Wolves*. He did not flatter them with any Hopes of Preferment or worldly Greatness, but rather the quite contrary; telling them what Dangers they were to undergo, and what Hazards and Difficulties they were to be expos'd to, even as the innocent Sheep among ravening Wolves. The Sheep, we know, is a Creature remark'd for its Meekness and Innocence, for it often receives, but never does any harm; and likewise for its Usefulness, for it furnishes us with all the Necessaries of Life, Food and Rayment, feeding us with its Flesh, and clothing us with its Fleece; and thereby supplies the Wants both of the Belly and the Back. Such meek and useful Creatures would Christ have all his Disciples and Followers to be, *viz. averse from the doing of any Evil, and prone to all manner of Good*. Whereas the rest of Mankind, who are their Enemies, are compar'd here to *Wolves*, whose Property it is to bite and devour: and indeed the World is too apt to worry the Flock of Christ, to *revile and persecute* his Followers, and to *say all manner of Evil of them for Christ's sake*.

However, Christ hath will'd them not to be dismay'd, but rather to *rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is their Reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the Prophets, and all holy Men that went before them, who now reign*

with him, and are abundantly recompens'd with a Crown of Glory.

Having thus inform'd and arm'd them against the worst that can happen, by an Assurance of an ample Reward for all that they shall do or suffer for him, he bids them go on with Courage and Chearfulness in the Way and Work about which he had set them ; adding withal some Directions for their better Assistance and Encouragement in so great a Work. As,

1. He wills them, in going upon his Errands, *to carry neither Purse, nor Scrip, nor Shoes*, as Men are wont to do in other Journies ; for he that calls them to more than ordinary Work, will take more than ordinary Care, and make a sutable Provision for them. *St. Matthew* hath it, *Provide neither Gold, nor Silver, nor Brass in your Purses ; that is, carry no Provision of Mony, nor Scrip for your Journey*, in which Travellers us'd to carry their Victuals ; *nor two Coats*, taking no care for Clothes or Shoes ; *nor yet for Staves*, to support or defend you in the way : meaning, that they should not trouble themselves with things that may be a Clog or Hindrance to them in the way and work of their Calling ; for God would provide for all their Wants, and furnish them with all Necessaries in his Service, which we find he accordingly did.

2. He bids them *to salute no Man by the way* : that is, spend no time in vain and empty Compliments and Salutations, that are usual among Men, nor be delay'd by any Offices of Friendship, Acquaintance, or other common Civilities to any ; but wholly mind and intend the Business you are sent about, and let nothing hinder or divert you from it : Not that all kind of Salutations or common Civilities were absolutely forbidden to the Apostles and Disciples of Christ ; for he himself commanded them, *Into whatsoever House they came, to salute it* : *Mat. 10. 12.* But the Salutations here forbidden, were those false and deceitful Compliments, that take up too much of the Time and Thoughts of vain Persons. There was a pious Salutation among the Jews, of wishing Peace to one another ; which was a Wish of Health and Happiness : And this they us'd to those they met Morning and Evening, and especially at the Entrance into each other's Houses ; nor did the Gentiles omit this religious Civility, but the Heathens did the same.

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This Custom our Saviour observ'd himself, and enjoin'd it on his Disciples: for tho he would not have them stay and neglect their Business, by frequent, formal, and ceremonious complimenting those they met with by the way; yet to shew he dislik'd not any due, seasonable and common Civilities, he order'd them, at their entring into any House, to *salute it*, saying, *Peace be to this House*. He himself, in the Evening of his Resurrection, going into the House where his Disciples were assembled, saluted them twice, with *Peace be unto you*, John 20. which was a Prayer for all sorts of Blessings to be heap'd upon them, being all included in the word *Peace*: And the same Charge he here gives to his Disciples, saying, *Into whatsoever House ye enter, first say, Peace be to this House*. And indeed, considering the Comprehensiveness of the Wish, no better Prayer can be made for them: for this Apostolical Salutation was not intended as a mere Compliment, but a real Benediction, as appears by the next words; *And if the Son of Peace be there, your Peace shall rest upon it*: that is, if there be any pious Person there, to whom this Blessing belongs, or is capable of receiving it, call'd here *the Son of Peace*, as the Apostate Traitor is call'd *the Son of Perdition*, John 17. 12. if, I say, there be any such worthy Person in it, qualify'd and prepar'd to receive the Blessing, your Prayer shall prevail for it, and your Peace shall come and rest upon that House: *if not*, if there be no such pious or worthy Person dwelling there, that is fit to receive such a Blessing, *it shall turn to you again*; your Prayers and good Wishes will not be lost, but the Blessing shall return into your own Bosom: for tho it is unprofitable to that House for which you ask it, yet your Zeal and good Wishes for them shall be as well accepted and rewarded, as if they were actually accomplish'd in them.

Again, another Piece of Advice that our Saviour gave his Disciples, was, *When they came into any Town or City, to enquire who was worthy* (that is, fit and able to receive them) and there to fix their Station, without removing to any other House, during their Stay in that Place; but to *remain in it, eating and drinking such things as they give*, receiving without any scruple the Entertainment that should be there offer'd to them; neither should the Giver or Receiver look upon it as any Burden, *for the Labourer is worthy of Hire*: meaning, that the Provisions they receive from others for preaching the Gospel to them, are not to be reckon'd as a Gift,

Gift, but a Debt due from them, and as duly to be paid as Wages are for Work; for *God hath ordain'd, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel*, 1 Cor. 9. 14. He who gave and hath the free Disposal of all Mens Estates, hath reserv'd and assign'd a certain Portion of their Substance for the Maintenance of his Ministers. This the Apostle in that Chapter sets forth and proves at large, both under the Law, and under the Gospel: *It is written in the Law of Moses* (saith he, ver. 9.) *thou shalt not muzzle the Mouth of the Ox that treadeth out the Corn*. In antient times the Corn, that is now thresh'd out by the Flail, was trodden out by the Feet of Oxen and other Beasts, to whom it was permitted to eat of the Corn and the Straw, as the Reward of their Labour; and God commanded that *they should not muzzle the Mouth of the Oxen*, to hinder them from eating, *when they were treading out the Corn*; Deut. 25. 4. *Doth God* (saith he) *take care for Oxen*, and order, that while he is treading the Corn, he should have the liberty to eat of it? And hath he made no Provision think you for his own Ministers? Does not the Ploughman plough in hope of a Reward, and the Husbandman sow in hope of reaping the Fruit of his Labour? *And if we have sown unto you spiritual things* (saith the Apostle, ver. 11.) *is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things?* Is it not barbarous Injustice to withdraw earthly Food from that Mouth from which ye receive heavenly Nourishment? Or will any bring Penury into the Family of that Man, by whom he is receiv'd into the Family of Christ? Shall the spiritual Husbandman in Christ's Vineyard fare worse than our ordinary Ploughmen? And when *every Workman is counted worthy of his Meat*, Mat. 9. 10. shall the Fellow-workers with Christ be left destitute of all Provision? No, God hath taken better care of them, and hath assign'd the Tenth of every Man's Substance to be their Portion; the withholding whereof, in whole or in part, is not ordinary Theft, but Sacrilege, and the worst of Robberies, even the robbing of God, who hath reserv'd that part for the maintenance of his Service, and given it to them that wait at his Altar. *Know ye not* (saith the Apostle) *that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the Temple?* that is, of the Tythes that were set apart and dedicated to the Use and Service of the Temple. *And they which wait at the Altar, are Partakers with the Altar*; that is, of the Offerings and Sacrifices brought and offer'd upon the Altar:

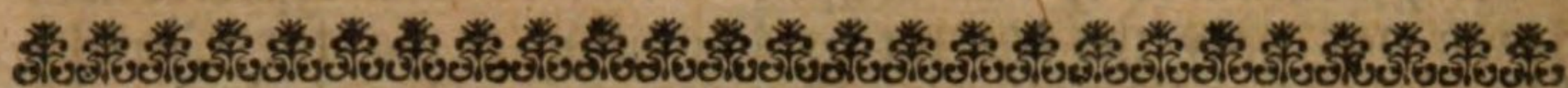
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Even so hath the Lord ordain'd, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel. Where the Apostle sets down not only the Matter or Provision made for Christ's Ministers, but likewise the Manner of it, that it be in the same manner as it was under the Law; *Even so:* that is, by Tythes and Offerings, for so was the Ministry of the Altar maintain'd. And in *Gal. 6. 6.* 'tis said, *Let him that is taught in the Word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.* Where tho the Proportion be not mention'd, yet is it to be interpreted by other Scriptures, where the tenth part is assign'd by God himself for that purpose.

And our Saviour's approving the punctual paying of Tythes in the *Pharisees*, saying, *These things ought ye to have done,* in an abundant Confirmation of that Proportion; and his adding, *Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven;* shews, that Christians should rather exceed than come short of them in that Particular.

Finally, *St. Paul*, in the Epistle to *Timothy*, wills, that the Elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double Honour, especially they who labour in the Word and Doctrine. Where by Honour is, by all Interpreters, understood a Maintenance; and by double Honour, an honourable Maintenance, for the same Reason here given, *For the Labourer is worthy of his Reward,* 1 Tim. 5. 17, 18. Thus we see our Saviour's sending forth his Apostles and Disciples, with the Care and Provision he hath made for them.





DISCOURSE XXXIII.

The EPISTLE for St. *Simon* and St. *Jude's* Day.

St. *Jude* ver. 1—9.

Jude the Servant of Christ, and Brother of James, to them that are sanctify'd by God the Father, and preserv'd in Jesus Christ, and call'd; Mercy, and Peace, and Love be multiply'd. Beloved, when I gave all Diligence to write unto you of the common Salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once deliver'd unto the Saints, &c.

THE Subject of this Day's Festival, is the Remembrance of a Pair of Saints, St. *Simon* and St. *Jude*; who being Brothers, and both Apostles, the Church hath coupled them together, and celebrated their Memory in one Solemnity.

For St. *Simon*, little more is mention'd of him in Scripture besides his Name, who is sometimes stil'd *Simon the Canaanite*, and sometimes *Simon the Zealot*; both which, in different Languages, signify the same thing, viz. one of a hot and vigorous Temper, reckon'd therefore of the Sect of the Zealots. Ecclesiastical History tells us, that in executing his Apostolical Office, he went into divers and sundry Countries; and among the rest, that he came to these *Western Islands*, and planted the Gospel here in *Britain*, where after many Troubles and Difficulties undergone by him, he suffer'd Martyrdom for the Faith of Christ.

For St. *Jude*, he likewise, in the Gospel, is call'd sometimes *Thaddeus*, and sometimes *Lebbeus*; it being usual in those times to have two or three different Names.

But

Epistle for St. Simon and St. Jude's Day. 253

But the most memorable thing of this Apostle, is the General Epistle left behind him; wherein he exhorts to Constancy and Perseverance in the Faith, to prevent the Danger of Apostacy, and escape the sore Evils that befall Revolters.

The Collect for this Day prays God, who hath built his Church upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head Corner-Stone; to grant us so to be join'd together in Unity of Spirit, that we may be made a Holy Temple acceptable unto him.

To which end, the Epistle directs us to stick close to the Christian Faith, as we shall see after. And in it I shall observe,

1st, The Inscription, in the first words, *Jude the Servant of Christ*; where his stiling himself *Jude the Servant of Christ*, hath made some question, whether it was *Jude* the Apostle, or another *Jude*, that was after Bishop of Jerusalem. But this Doubt hath but a weak Foundation, against the current Testimony and Tradition of the Church; especially considering, that an Apostle of Christ signifies one sent upon his Service by a Commission from him, and so in effect 'tis all one with a *Servant of Christ*, and may be express'd by the one as well as by the other. But to put this matter out of doubt, he stiles himself, in the next words, *the Brother of James*; for we read so he was, *Mat. 13. 55.* and that can agree to no other *Jude* but this Apostle, who gives himself these Titles, to distinguish him from *Judas Iscariot*, who had made that Name infamous and detestable by betraying his Saviour.

For the Persons to whom this Epistle is directed, 'tis to them that are sanctify'd by God the Father, and preserv'd in Jesus Christ, and called: that is, to all good Christians in general, and more especially to the Jewish Converts, who had receiv'd the Christian Faith, describ'd here by their *Sanctification by God the Father, their Preservation by God the Son, and their Vocation, or being call'd by God the Holy Ghost.* These he salutes in the following words, with Wishes of all spiritual Blessings, saying, *Mercy unto you, and Peace and Love be multiply'd*: which is the common Salutation of the Apostles in all their Epistles, and includes in it all manner of Happiness. From the Inscription I proceed,

2^{dly}, To

2dly, To the Subject-Matter of this Epistle; and that begins in the next Verse: *Beloved* (saith he) *when I gave all Diligence to write unto you of the common Salvation*; that is, of the great Deliverance and Preservation of the Christians, from the fatal and general Destruction that was coming on the unbelieving Jews; *it was needful to write unto you upon that Subject, and from thence to exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints.* Where by the *Faith deliver'd unto the Saints*, we are to understand the Doctrine of Christ reveal'd to us in his holy Gospel, which contains the Way and Means contriv'd by the Wisdom, and effected by the Power of God for Man's Salvation. This Faith is said to be *once* deliver'd, that is, once for all, *simul & semel*, there being no new Discovery or Revelation of the Will and Mind of God to be made, beside that which is made already, and all Additions and Contradictions to it are to be rejected with an Anathema.

But how would the Apostle have us to *contend* for this Faith? Why, earnestly; that is, not feignedly or in pretence only, but sincerely, and in good earnest; nor yet faintly, with Coldness and Indifference, but zealously, with warm and vigorous Affections; and likewise constantly, without Weariness and Defection.

1. I say, we are to contend earnestly or sincerely for the Faith, in opposition to all false or feign'd Pretences to it. There are some who make use of Religion only for a Cloke to cover their Ambition, Avarice, and other Enormities; and others that plead for and pretend to the Faith, merely to promote a Faction and serve a Party, which is not so much to contend for as against it.

2. We are to contend earnestly; that is, zealously and warmly for the Faith, in opposition to all Coldness and Indifference about it: *'Tis good* (saith the Apostle) *to be zealously affected always in a good thing*; and we cannot be zealous in a better thing, than in the Faith of Christ. To be cool and indifferent here, is to be lukewarm and hypocritical; which instead of pleasing Christ, will provoke him to spue us out of his Mouth.

3. We are to contend earnestly, that is, constantly and perseveringly for the Faith unto the end, in opposition to all Weariness and Apostacy: *We shall reap* (saith the Apostle) *if we faint not*; but if we flag and grow weary of our Work, we shall reap nothing but the barren Fruits of
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our own Folly. We must *fight the good Fight of Faith*, and persist in it, before we can receive the Crown; but if we let fall the Combat, we may expect nothing but Shame and Disappointment. He that runs a Race, must hold out to the end, if he mean to win the Prize; and we must *keep the Faith*, and continue so doing to the last, if we expect to *receive the end of our Faith, even the Salvation of our Souls*.

But to shew farther the manner of contending for the Faith, we must know, that this is not to be done by Arms; for Faith being an immanent and internal Act of the Soul, is not to be forc'd by any external Acts of Violence; 'tis the *Mahometan*, not the Christian way, to preserve or propagate Religion by the Sword. It hath been well observ'd by a wise Man, that Religion is often lost, but never gain'd by Rebellion, and that none fight for Religion that have any: they are only the double-minded and designing Men that have recourse to Arms for that purpose; and our Saviour hath told us, that *they who thus use the Sword, shall perish by the Sword*: whereas the contending for the Faith here exhorted to, is,

1. The contending for it by Arguments, and the wise Arts of Persuasion: for the Mind is wrought upon by Instruction, not by Compulsion; and Truth enters into the Soul, not by dint of Arms, but by dint of Argument: *Be ready* (saith St. Peter) *to give a Reason of the Faith and Hope that is in you*; 1 Pet. 3. 15. and we should be always ready, by Scripture and Reason, to convince and convert Gainsayers.

2. We are to contend for the Faith by earnest and fervent Prayer. We cannot propagate or defend the Faith by our own Strength, and therefore must call in the Aid of Divine Grace to our Succour. Peter's Faith had fail'd, if Christ had not pray'd for him; and ours will fail much more without the like Assistance: But tho we can do nothing without him, yet *we can do all things thro Christ that strengthens us*; his Grace will be sufficient for us, and if he be for us, it matters not who is against us. Prayer then, which engages God of our side, is the best Weapon to defend the Faith; and if we rightly wield it in our contending for it, we shall not fail of Success: for *the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much*, Jam. 5. 16.

Lastly, We are to contend for the Faith by Magnanimity and Patience in Sufferings; so did the Apostles and Primitive

mitive Christians, who overcame all their Enemies, not by fighting, but by suffering, and vanquish'd the greatest Opposition by bearing, not by shrinking from the Cross. They planted the Faith by their Doctrine, and water'd it with their Blood, and that made it to spring up into a plentiful Harvest, insomuch that it now spreads over the face of the whole Earth: And nothing so checks its Growth or hinders its Progress, as Wars and Commotions; for by that means what was gain'd by Patience, will be lost by Resistance, which is best prevented by a quiet and peaceable living by the Rules of it. In short, *the Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, and are mighty thro God, to the pulling down of the Strong-holds of Satan, and the building us up in our most Holy Faith.* Christ the Captain of our Salvation was made perfect by Sufferings, and his Followers the Apostles attain'd to perfection the same way; and if we suffer with or for him, we shall also be glorify'd together.

But why are we thus *earnestly to contend for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints?* Why, for that the Apostle here subjoins two weighty Reasons: the one is taken from the Number and Subtlety of those Adversaries, that seek to subvert or to corrupt the Faith; the other from the great Danger of falling from it into Unbelief.

For the 1st, The Apostle in the next words tells us, that *there are certain Men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordain'd to this Condemnation; ungodly Men, turning the Grace of God into Lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.* Where the certain Men crept in are, in the parallel Place of St. Peter, said to be *false Prophets and false Teachers*, 2 Pet. 2. 12. who drew the People from sound Doctrine, and led them into many dangerous Errors: their *creeping in unawares*, is there express'd by their *privily bringing in damnable Heresies*; and by St. Paul, by their *creeping into Houses*, and deceiving or *leading Captive the weaker Sex*, 2 Tim. 3. 6. both which set forth the Slyness and Subtlety of their false Arts to seduce the People, and to compass their evil Designs. And these are here said to be *of old ordain'd to this Condemnation*; where the word in the Original is, *προγεγραμμένοι εἰς τὸ τοῦ κρίματος*, which is badly render'd, *ordain'd to this Condemnation*; as if they were by a fatal Decree determin'd to it: but the true Signification is, that it was of old forewritten or prophesied of them, that they would bring this Judgment

Judgment upon them; and is therefore express'd by St. Peter, by their *bringing upon themselves swift Destruction*. And these are describ'd by the Wickedness of their Lives, and Corruption of their Manners; *ungodly Men, turning the Grace of God into Lasciviousness*, whose Ways are contrary to the Will of God, by making his Goodness an Encouragement to Vice, and abusing his Blessings by Luxury and Wantonness: which things they do, and allow themselves in so long, till they come to that height of Wickedness, as to *deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*; that is, till they arrive at Atheism, by denying the Being and Providence of God; or fall into Deism, by *denying our Lord Jesus Christ*, which St. Peter expresses, by *denying the Lord that bought them*: which made the Apostle caution the *Hebrews* against it, saying, *Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God*. And this will lead me to the

2d Reason for contending earnestly for the Faith, taken from the extreme Danger of Infidelity, or falling from the Faith of Christ. To convince us whereof, the Apostle here puts us upon remembrance of what we before knew and heard of, how that the Lord having sav'd the People out of the Land of Egypt, and afterward destroy'd them that believ'd not, we might the better see the great Evil and Mischief of Infidelity. This Instance of Unbelief is set forth in the 3d Chapter to the *Hebrews*, together with the sore Punishment that attended it; where the Apostle asking the Question, *To whom God swore in his Wrath that they should not enter into his Rest?* answers, *To them that believ'd not*. Infidelity shut the Gates of Heaven against them, so that they could not enter in because of Unbelief; ver. 18, 19.

This is farther confirm'd by two or three doleful Examples, mention'd in the following Verses of the Epistle for this Day: The first whereof is that of the fallen Angels, in those words, *The Angels that kept not their first Estate, but left their own Habitation, he hath reserv'd in everlasting Chains under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the Great Day*; meaning, those of them that apostatiz'd from God, and fell from the Faith and Love of their Maker, were cast out of Heaven, and are bound over to the eternal Torments and Miseries of Hell: which shews the Danger of revolting from the Faith, and the Safety of contending for and adhering to it. The next Example is that of *Sodom and Gomorrha, and the Cities round about*, who falling from the

Faith, gave themselves over to Fornication; and going after strange Flesh, are set forth for an Example, suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire. A sad Instance of the fatal End of all Sensualities, how the Flames of Lust kindle the Flames of God's Wrath, and lead to Fire everlasting, of which that material Fire that consum'd them was a Token or Sign.

Lastly, Here is farther mention made of another sort of Hereticks who had left the Faith, stil'd, *Filthy Dreamers, that defile the Flesh*. These are suppos'd to be the Hereticks that liv'd in the Apostle's time, known by the name of *Gnosticks*, who were led about by vain Dreams, to the abusing of themselves, and corrupting of others. They are describ'd here by two vile and wicked Practices; their *despising Dominions*, and their *speaking evil of Dignities*: The one relates to Temporal, the other to Spiritual Governors.

For the first, They taught the Doctrine of Christian Liberty, so as to free Christians from the Yoke of Government; and stretch'd it so far, as to exempt Subjects from Obedience to Magistrates, and Servants from Subjection to their Masters: so that Inferiours, instead of serving and honouring, were taught to turn upon and rise up against their Superiours, which is what is here meant by *despising Dominion*.

For the second; *Their speaking evil of Dignities*, signifies their contumelious Behaviour, or setting at nought Church-Rulers or Governors: when they who are to be highly esteem'd, and counted worthy of double Honour for God's and Christ's sake, are villify'd, ill-spoken of, and evil-intreated by a profane and wicked World. These were the corrupt Doctrines and Practices of these Hereticks, and there are but too many in our days who embrace their pernicious Errors, and tread in the Steps of their evil Examples, against whom the Saint of this Day would have us to contend earnestly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints; which is the principal Lesson taught in this General Epistle, inscrib'd to all Christians, who are all concern'd to learn and practise it.

To draw then to a Conclusion; Let us all engage in this happy Contention, to preserve the Unity and Purity of the Christian Faith, against all Sin and Error. There are some that would undermine the Faith by Schisms and Divisions,

Divisions, and others that would corrupt it by Errors and Heresies; both which are great Opposers of Christ's Doctrine, and great Obstructors of our Salvation: And therefore let us contend,

1. For the Unity of the Faith against all Sectaries and Dividers: *There is but one Faith* (saith St. Paul) and this one Faith was but *once deliver'd to the Saints*. Let us not then divide it by Sects, nor multiply it by new Pretences to Revelation; but *stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel*; as we are exhorted, *Phil. 1. 27.*

2. Let us contend earnestly for the Purity of the Faith, against all that would blend or corrupt it. Of this kind are Hereticks of all sorts, who seek to deprave or deny many of the Articles of the Christian Faith; as the Doctrine of the Trinity, the Satisfaction of Christ, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the like; staggering and perverting the Faith of many in these things.

3. Let us contend earnestly for the Continuance and Propagation of the Faith, against those that would subvert and undermine it. Of this sort are the Atheists, Antiscripturists, Libertines, and Free-Thinkers, who would lay aside all Religion, or only make it a Tool to serve their other secular Ends and Designs.

Lastly, Let us contend earnestly for the Faith, by living answerable to it, against all loose and profane Professors of it, who are its greatest Enemies, and do it the most Mischief. In a word, let us contend for it against all Opposers open and secret; and then by fighting the good Fight of Faith, and keeping to it, we shall e'er long receive a Crown of Glory: Which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XXXIV.

The GOSPEL for St. Simon and St. Jude's Day.

St. John xv. 17, to the end.

These Things I command you, that ye love one another. If the World hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you: If ye were of the World, the World would love his own; because ye are not of the World, but I have chosen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you, &c.

IN the Collect for this Day, we pray for Grace to be join'd together in Unity of Spirit by the Apostle's Doctrine, that we may be a holy Temple acceptable unto God. To which end,

In the Gospel for the Day, we are exhorted to Brotherly Love, as the best Cement of that Union, and the firmest Bond to hold us together. It begins with our Saviour's Command to that purpose; *These Things I command you* (saith he) *that ye love one another.* He had, in the foregoing part of the Chapter, shew'd, in many Instances, the great Love he bore to them; *As my Father loved me, so have I loved you*, ver. 9. which, we may be sure, was with an intire and ardent Affection. He treated them not as Servants, who are kept at a distance from the Master's Presence and Counsels: *I call you not Servants* (saith he) *for the Servant knoweth not what his Master doth*; but I have call'd and treated you *as Friends*, by imparting to you the Secrets of my Father's Mind and Will, and that so faithfully, as to hide nothing from you: *For all things that I heard of my Father, I have made known unto you*; ver. 15. Again, I prevented you with my free and undeserv'd Favours, having chosen you to be my Disciples, when you had no Thoughts of chusing me, that I might obtain for you an Answer to your Prayers; and *whatsoever ye ask the Fa-*
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ther in my Name, he may give it you; ver. 16. These are all Tokens of the most dear and unfeigned Love: and yet he gave a higher Instance of it than all this, in vouchsafing to die for them; And greater Love than this hath no Man, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends. ver. 13.

And now having mention'd these things, he lets them know what Return he would have them make for them; and that was no difficult Service, but the soft and easy Return of loving one another: which he might very well command and expect from them, from the Obligations he had laid upon them; and therefore urges it in a commanding Stile upon them, saying, *These Things I command you, that ye love one another.* Now this Love here inculcated upon them, consists chiefly in inward hearty Wishes and Desires of each other's Happiness and Welfare, and likewise in outward Expressions and Endeavours to promote it; avoiding all things that may offend, injure, or disquiet our Neighbour, and doing and delighting in all good Offices that may be pleasing or profitable to him: *Love worketh no Ill to his Neighbour* (saith the Apostle) *Rom. 13. 10.* it will hurt none in Body, Goods, or Name, but, on the contrary, will do the best Service it can to each; and therefore Love is said by the Apostle to be *the fulfilling of the Law*, and elsewhere 'tis made the Sum and Quintessence of the Gospel: which should teach us to pray and labour for this excellent Grace, and *above all things to have fervent Love and Charity among our selves.*

But lest any should be discourag'd from this Duty by the Hatred and contrary Practices of the World, our Saviour seeks here, by sundry Arguments, to arm his Followers against all such Discouragements. And,

1st, To fortify them against the Hatred of the World, he minds them of the base and unworthy Carriage of the World towards him, to prevent Surprize if they met with something like it: *If the World hate you* (saith he) *ye know that it hated me before it hated you.* It began with me, and you may not think it strange if they pursue you, as my Followers, with the same. Tho I came into the World merely to rescue it from Misery and Ruin, and to purchase Redemption and Salvation for it; yea, tho I lov'd the World so well, as to lay down my Life for it, and shed my Blood, to procure for it eternal Life: yet hath it return'd me Hatred for my Good-will, and instead of requiting my Love, hath repaid it with Affronts and Indignities.

But how came the World thus to hate Christ, who came into it merely for the Happiness and Salvation of it? Why, the Reason of that is plain: He came first to save Men from their Sins, in order to the Salvation of their Souls, which could not be accomplish'd without it; and therefore the chief Reason of the Angel's assigning to him the Name *Jesus*, or *Saviour*, was from *his saving the People from their Sins*; Mat. 1. 21. Now because the World, by reason of the Corruption of Mens Nature, and the strong Biass of Custom and bad Examples, were so much in love with their darling and beloved Vices, they could not but hate him, who would take them off from what they were so long accustom'd and addicted to, tho it were for their greater Good. And this is,

2dly, A Reason given by our Saviour for the World's Hatred of his Followers: *If ye were of the World (saith he) the World would love his own.* If you would shew yourselves the Friends and Followers of the World, by conforming to the vicious Courses, evil Customs, and bad Examples of it, the World would then take you for its own, and love and caress you for its Friends and Admirers; *but because ye are not of the World, but have renounc'd the Poms and Vanities of it, professing yourselves to be but Pilgrims and Strangers here, and to belong to another and more heavenly Country, therefore the World hateth you.* And *because I have chosen you out of the World, to be the Members of my Church, and to be a peculiar People zealous of good Works, dignify'd above, and separated from the common Herd of other Men, therefore do they make you the Object of their Hatred and Contempt.* Your Deeds being directly contrary to theirs, there can be no Concord or Agreement between you, no more than there is between Light and Darkness, or between God and *Belial*. Your Piety upbraids their Profaneness, and your holy Lives are a Censure and Check to their ungodly Conversations; and this raises their Spleen, and sharpens their Tongues against you, *thinking it strange (as St. Peter expresses it) or taking it amiss, that you run not with them into the same Excess of Riot, speaking evil of you: 1 Pet. 4. 4.* reproaching and railing at you for refusing to run headlong with them into the Commission of their abominable Impieties.

But to comfort the Disciples under this hard Usage, our Saviour bids them, in the next words, to *remember the*
Word

Word that he said unto them, The Servant is not greater than the Lord. If they have persecuted me (saith he) they will also persecute you; if they have kept my Saying, they will keep yours also. Where he minds them of what he had often told them, that the Disciple is not above his Master, nor the Servant above his Lord; Mat. 10. 24. In the Verses immediately going before, he gave them to understand, that they should be hated of all Men for his sake, and should be persecuted from City to City; withal bidding them not to marvel if the World hated them, for it hated him before it hated them: And the Disciple cannot in reason expect to be better us'd than his Master, or the Servant than his Lord; it is enough for them to be as their Lords and Masters, and they may not hope to be better treated or dealt with than they. If their Masters meet with Persecution, and are made to drink of the bitter Cup, 'tis unreasonable for the Servants to expect wholly to escape it, or that the Cup of Affliction should altogether pass from them. If they have kept my Saying (saith Christ) they will keep yours also; that is, your Doctrine as well as Persons are like to meet with the same Entertainment with mine: If they have receiv'd my Doctrine, or kept my Saying, they may receive yours also; but if they have not obey'd or observ'd, but rejected mine, you may easily think what will become of yours; for being the same Doctrine, 'twill find the same Usage.

But all these things will they do unto you (saith he) for my Name's-sake, because they know not him that sent me. All this ill Treatment, both of your Persons and Doctrine, will be shew'd you upon my account, and for the Hatred they bear to me, because you are my Disciples, and preach in my Name, as also because they know not the Father that sent me. They will not believe that I come from God, tho I bring the Broad Seal of Heaven to confirm my Commission, even a Power of working Miracles, so many and so great, that none but one that comes from God, or is assisted by a Divine Power, is able to perform. Tho they daily see these things done by me, yet they will not believe in me, nor know him that sent me: which Ignorance is not invincible for want of the means of knowing better, which are daily afforded them; but wilful and affected, by their obstinate Refusal of the Means vouchsaf'd to them, and wilfully withstanding the Evidence of Truth convey'd by them: so that their pretended Ignorance is utterly in-
S 4 *excusable,*

excusable, and is so far from lessening, that it highly aggravates both their Sin and their Condemnation: And therefore we find our Saviour, in the following words, arguing both from his Doctrine and Miracles, to enhance their Guilt, and increase their Punishment.

1. As for his Doctrine, he tells them, *ver. 22. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had Sin; but now they have no Cloke for their Sin.* If I had not come in the Flesh as the Messiah, to reveal unto them the Father's Will, and to instruct them in the true Way and Method of Salvation, speaking to them as never Man spake before or since; they might have seem'd in a manner innocent, and their Sin, if any, would have been nothing in comparison of what it is now. But now, after so clear a Discovery and Proof of my Mission from the Father, and my Commission to teach and direct them; and after having faithfully discharg'd this Office, by unfolding to them the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, and given them the Words of eternal Life: they are now utterly void of all Excuse, they can make no Apology nor shew any Colour or Pretence for their Sin; they cannot plead Ignorance of their Duty, when the Light of Divine Truth brake forth and shin'd round about them: nor can they pretend Weakness or Inability to do as they were directed, since all due Encouragement and Assistance was tender'd to them, and his Grace was ever ready and sufficient for them; so that all Pleas and Pretences are wholly cut off from them, and they have no Cloke to cover their Infidelity. And having given them such plain Evidence of his being sent from God for their Salvation, all opposing of him must be a wilful resisting of God himself, in whose Name and by whose Authority he had spoken unto them: for which reason he adds these words, *He that hateth me, hateth my Father also;* both which are done by rejecting his Words, and both will be follow'd with the utter Rejection of their Persons for ever. Moreover,

2. Our Saviour farther argues with them from his Works, and aggravates their Infidelity from the many Miracles they saw done before them; *ver. 24. If I had not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.* This was spoken immediately to and of the Jews, who obstinately withstood all the Means and Methods of Conviction. They had been Ear-witnesses of his

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his Doctrine, who spake as never Man spake; and they were Eye-witnesses of his Miracles, who did those Works that never Man did: and yet neither could what they had heard or seen overcome their Prejudices, or work any Faith or Belief in him. *If I do not the Works of my Father (saith he in another place) believe me not; but if I do, tho ye believe not me, believe the Works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him: John 10. 37, 38.* Where Christ appeals to his Works for the Truth of his Messiahship; *The Works that I do (saith he) in my Father's Name, they bear witness of me, ver. 25.* being a clear Demonstration of a Divine Power: which Works if you had not seen done by me before your eyes, something might be said to extenuate and excuse your Unbelief; *If ye were blind (as he told the Pharisees) and could not see, you should have no Sin: No great Guilt would lie upon you, but such as might be easily answer'd and done away. But now ye say, We see, therefore your Sin remaineth: Since you own your Eyes are open, that you sin not thro Ignorance or Inability to know better, but that what you do is done knowingly and deliberately; therefore your Sin remaineth, and the Guilt of it will lie heavy upon you: John 9. 41.* Now you have seen my Works, and have thereby sufficient Evidence of my being sent by the Father, your Sin is inexcusable, and your Infidelity unpardonable; for it proceeds from a certain Malignity of Mind whereby you hate both me and my Father. *But this cometh to pass (saith he) that the Word might be fulfilled that is spoken in their Law, They hated me without a Cause.* The words are extant in *Psal. 35. 19.* where David speaks of some that hated and oppos'd him, who ought in Reason and Gratitude to have lov'd and obey'd him: which was spoken literally of David and his Enemies, who pursu'd and persecuted him without a Cause; and prophetically of Christ, whose Adversaries most unjustly, and against many Obligations to the contrary, harbour'd a deadly Hatred, and carry'd on malicious Designs against him.

However, tho the World may thus despitefully use and intreat him, returning him Hatred for his Good-will; tho they may treat him as an Enemy, and reject him as an Impostor; yet there is one coming, that will give them a better light into these matters, and cause them to see and believe those Truths, which at present they cannot or will not perceive. *When the Comforter is come (saith he) whom*

I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. He who is here stiled a Comforter, is in the Original an Advocate, or one that pleads or defends a Cause. So the same Word is render'd, 1 John 2. 1. *If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, (to wit, one to plead our Cause before him) even Jesus Christ the righteous.* And this Advocate hath here another Advocate to plead his Cause, and that is the Holy Ghost, call'd here *the Spirit of Truth*, whom he will send from the Father; for he is said to proceed both from the Father and the Son: and he at his coming shall give Men a clearer Insight into Divine Truths, he shall maintain my Cause against all Opposers, and plainly demonstrate the Truth of my Mission. *He shall testify of me*, partly by the inward Motions and Excitations of your Minds, and partly by the outward Ministry and Operation of his Miracles; and by both shall certify you of the Truth of what I have declar'd to you, and convince you of the Divinity of my Doctrine.

And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning: that is, when the Holy Ghost cometh, he shall endow you with Power from on high, and furnish you with Abilities to bear your Testimony of me in all parts of the World. To which end, he shall pour upon you the Gifts of Wisdom and Knowledg, to enable you to discern the Truth aright; and likewise the Gift of Tongues, to enable you to discover and propagate it in the Languages of all Countries: for which you are already in some measure qualify'd, having been with me from my first Entrance on the Ministry, and continu'd with me ever since.

This is the Sum of this Day's Gospel; from which we may learn,

1. The great Lesson of Brotherly Love and Kindness, which our Saviour here commands, and gives in charge to all his Followers, and elsewhere makes it the distinguishing Mark and Badg of his Disciples; willing them to love their Neighbour as themselves, and to do to all Men as they would be done unto, by avoiding all things that may be any way hurtful to them, and following all things that may be profitable to their Salvation.

2. We learn from hence, that the Hatred of the World is no Discharge from this Duty of loving them, nor should it

it be any Discouragement from it: for our Saviour teaches us to *love them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us*; and here tells us, that *if the World hate us*, we need not wonder, for *it hated him before it hated us*: And the Disciple cannot expect better Usage than his Master. 'Tis honour enough for us to be made conformable to his Sufferings, that we may be Partakers of his Glory; and we may be well enough content to bear the Cross, that will surely bring us to a never-fading Crown.

3. We learn hence the Heinousness of the Sin of Unbelief, which the clear Discoveries and Revelations of the Gospel have render'd altogether inexcusable. For after all that Christ hath said and done for Man's Salvation, it must be mere Obstinacy and Perverseness of Will to refuse or neglect it: and that will shew us,

Lastly, The great Danger of Infidelity, or sinning against Light and Knowledg, which our Saviour makes the Reason and Aggravation of their Condemnation; that *Light is come into the World, but Men love Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil*.

Upon the whole then, let us take heed that there be not found in any of us an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God: which God grant, &c.



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DISCOURSE XXXV.

The EPISTLE for *All-Saints* Day.

Rev. vii. 2—13.

And I saw another Angel ascending from the East, having the Seal of the living God; and he cry'd with a loud Voice to the four Angels, to whom it was given to hurt the Earth and the Sea, saying, Hurt not the Earth, nor the Sea, nor the Trees, till we have sealed the Servants of our God in the Foreheads, &c.

HAVING celebrated the particular Saints recorded in the Annals of the Church, there remains one Festival more for *All Saints*; especially those that are departed this Life in the Faith, Fear, and Favour of God, and advanc'd to the Regions of Bliss and Glory in the highest Heavens. All which are yearly remember'd by us on this Day, according to that Saying of the Psalmist, *The Righteous shall be had in everlasting Remembrance.*

Not that we are to pray unto them or for them, for both those are bootless and uncommanded Services; but to preserve the Honour and Memory of their Vertues, to praise God for the Benefit of their good Examples, and to pray unto him for Grace so to tread in their steps, that with them we may be Partakers of his everlasting Kingdom.

To this purpose, the Collect for the Day teaches us to pray to *Almighty God, who hath knit together his Elect in one Communion and Fellowship, in the mystical Body of his Son Christ our Lord, to grant us Grace so to follow his blessed Saints in all vertuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable Joys, which he hath prepared for them that unfeignedly love him.* Where we are minded of that one Fellowship and Communion of Saints, into which God hath

hath knit together his chosen People in the mystical Body of Christ; to the intent that we may keep stedfast in the Communion of the Church Militant here upon Earth, that we may be fitted to join for ever with the Church Triumphant hereafter in Heaven. To which end, we pray this day for Grace to imitate their holy Lives in this World, that we may be qualify'd to partake with them in the Happiness of the next: being encourag'd by their Example to run with patience the Race that is set before us, in hopes of attaining to that Prize of Bliss and Glory, which our Forerunners in the Faith have already receiv'd.

The Epistle for the Day contains a Vision of St. *John's*, in which was represented to him some of the evil Angels that have power to hurt the Earth; and likewise some of the good Angels, that have power to save and deliver it.

Of the first sort, are those spoken of in the first Verse of this Chapter, wherein St. *John* mentions his *seeing four Angels standing on the four Corners of the Earth, holding the four Winds of the Earth, that the Wind should not blow on the Earth, nor on the Sea, nor on any Tree*. Where by the four Angels some understand the Emissaries or Instruments of Satan, who have power from God to punish the Earth with Famine, Pestilence, and the Sword, and to execute his Vengeance upon the Wicked, when he thinks fit to permit or commission them thereunto; as also to afflict and trouble his own Church and People, for the trial of their Faith and Constancy, when he sees cause to suffer it. These Angels or Messengers are said to stand on the four Corners or Quarters of the Earth, ready to execute God's Judgments upon the World, whenever he is pleas'd to permit or command them. Moreover, they are describ'd *holding the four Winds of the Earth*: that is, having the Command of the Winds, to raise or restrain them as occasion shall require; either by making them high and boisterous, to scatter and infest the Earth; or by causing them to cease, *not to blow on the Earth*, to refresh it, *nor on the Sea*, to move it, *nor on any Tree*, to nourish and fructify it: all which are suppos'd to relate to the Punishments foretold and threatned to the Land of *Judea*, putting a stop to them for a while, and for some particular Reasons not suffering them to break out presently.

After which, the Epistle for the Day tells us, *He saw another Angel ascending from the East, having the Seal of the living God*. Where by another Angel is meant one of the good

good Angels, stiled *another*, in opposition to the former destroying Angels. He is said to *ascend from the East*, that is, as some expound it, to come from Christ, who is sometimes call'd *Ἀνατολή*, the East, or the rising Sun, the Sun of Righteousness, or the Day-spring from on high, which riseth in the East; *Mal. 4. 2. Luke 1. 78.* This good Angel is said to have the Seal of the living God: the Holy Scriptures make frequent mention of the Seal of the Spirit, the Seal of the living God, and the like; whereby he distinguishes his own Flock, and marks them up for eternal Life. *The Foundation of the Lord standeth sure* (saith the Apostle) *having this Seal, the Lord knoweth who are his*; *2 Tim. 2. 19.* Where this Seal is said to have a double Stamp or Impress: on the one side it is, God is sure and faithful to his People; on the other side, his People are true and faithful unto him: which being as it were engraven on a Seal, may confirm us in the Truth of both. Hence the Servants of God are said to be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, *Eph. 1. 13.*

Now the Use of a Seal (you know) is to serve as a Mark or Character, whereby to know what is ours, or belongs to us. Thus when any Wares or Commodities are bought by any, he is wont to set his Mark or Seal to them, that they may be known to be his. And because Men were as ordinarily bought and sold in those days, as any other Goods or Commodity, nothing was more ordinary than to set a Mark or Seal upon them, either in their Forehead, or some other part, to distinguish them from all other Mens Servants. So *Theophylact* tells us in his Notes on *Rom. 8. 10.* *He that hath not the Seal, is not the Servant or Goods of the Master, which are commonly known by that Mark.* *St. John* speaks of God the Father's sealing his Son, *Chap. 6. 27.* *Him hath God the Father sealed.* And that was his sending down his Holy Spirit, which in the shape of a Dove lighted upon him; and a Voice from Heaven declaring him to be his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased, *Mat. 3. 16, 17.* Which was the fulfilling of that Prophecy of him, *Isa. 42. 1.* *Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my Soul delighteth! I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles:* meaning, that by the Seal of the Spirit, viz. its Doctrine and Miracles, Christ was demonstrated to be his especial anointed Servant, to reveal the Will of the Father, and to atone for the Sins of the World. And by the same Spirit all good Christians are said to be sealed to the Day of Redemption, *Eph. 4. 30.* that is,

is, to be set apart or mark'd up for the Day of Salvation. Suitable hereunto, the good Angel here, that had the Seal of the living God, is said to cry with a loud Voice to the four other Angels, to whom it was given to hurt the Earth and the Sea; saying, Hurt not the Earth, nor the Sea, nor the Trees, till we have sealed the Servants of our God in their Foreheads. The sense whereof is, that those destroying Angels that had a Commission to punish the Inhabitants of Judea for their Wickedness, should not proceed to any Acts of Vengeance, till the Servants of God, that is, the true Believers and sound Christians, receiv'd the Seal of his Spirit; by that Mark to be preserv'd from that common Destruction, which was lighting upon others. By which we may see the great Care that God Almighty takes to rescue his faithful Servants from the Judgments that befall impenitent Sinners. For tho his Justice will not suffer him to acquit the Guilty, yet he sheweth Mercy unto thousands in them that love him and keep his Commandments. He would not bring a Flood to drown the wicked World, till he had prepar'd an Ark to save righteous Noah and his Family, nor would he rain down Fire and Brimstone from Heaven to consume the Sodomites, till he had given warning to righteous Lot to depart out of the place, to escape the Conflagration. When the destroying Angel was commanded to smite the Houses of the Egyptians with the Pestilence, and to destroy the First-born both of Man and Beast; God Almighty order'd that a Mark or Token should be set on the Houses of the Israelites: to the end that seeing the Mark, the destroying Angel should pass over them, and save them from the Destruction that befel the Egyptians; as we read in the twelfth Chapter of Exodus.

In like manner, when the People of Judea were to be visited with a sore Judgment, a good Angel was commission'd to respite the Execution; that the Destroyers should not hurt the Earth, or the Sea, or any of the Trees or Fruits of the Earth, till he had sealed the Servants of God in the Forehead, to secure them from the common Calamity. And St. John here tells us, that he heard the number of them which were sealed, being in a Vision represented to him. And the number of the Sealed amounted to an hundred and forty and four thousand, of all the Tribes of the Children of Israel. Of each Tribe were sealed twelve thousand, as we find them particularly rehears'd in the four following Verses.

From

From whence we may learn, that God ever had and will still have a Church or peculiar People to himself in the worst of Times, and that no Malice or Persecution of Enemies shall be ever able totally to extirpate or destroy it. The Covenant he made with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, was, That he would be a God to them and their Seed for ever, and that they and their Posterity should be his People to all Generations. And *David* brings in God Almighty declaring that he will *keep mercy for them for evermore, and his Covenant shall stand fast with them*, Psal. 89. 29. No Time or Accident shall make him forget his Promise, or suffer his Truth to fail.

In the days of *Ahab* and *Jezebel*, such havock was made of the Priests, and the People fell so fast into Idolatry, that *Elijah* thought all the good Men were slain from off the Earth, and that none of the faithful Servants of God were left: but God told him otherwise, saying, *Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, who have not bow'd the Knee to Baal, and whose Mouths have not kiss'd him*. 1 Kings 19. 18.

In the general Excision or Rejection of the Jews for their Infidelity, the Church of God did not wholly fail, but still a Remnant was saved. The Bishop of Jerusalem told St. Paul of many thousand Jews that believ'd, being zealous for the Law; Acts 21. 20. God will always have a Church upon Earth, against which the Gates of Hell shall never prevail; and if the Powers of Hell cannot overthrow it, we need not fear what earthly Powers can do against it. *Ezekiel* in a Vision heard a Command from God to set a Mark upon the Foreheads of them that lamented the Abominations of Jerusalem: and tho the Destroyers were to smite others without sparing or pitying any, yet they were not to come near any Man upon whom this Mark was found; as we read, *Ezek. 9. 4, 5, 6*. And here in this Vision of St. John, before the destroying Angels could hurt the Earth or the Sea, or punish any Inhabitants of the Land, a hundred forty and four thousand were sealed in the Forehead, to be saved by that Mark from the common Destruction, that was coming upon the rest. And this is the first Part of the Epistle for this Day; which contains the Mercy and Favour that God sheweth to his Saints, in rescuing them from common Dangers and Judgments, and marking them up to eternal Life: *And such Honour have all his Saints*.

The second Part of this Day's Epistle contains the Praises and Hallelujahs sung unto God both in Earth and Heaven, for this his signal Care and Coronation of his Saints : which things were here in a Vision farther represented to him.

After this (saith he) I beheld, and lo! a great Multitude, which no Man could number, of all Nations, Kindreds and People, and Tongues, stood before the Throne, &c. Where he speaks of the Persons concern'd in sounding forth those Praises and Hallelujahs here upon Earth ; and they were all those sound, pure, and faithful Christians, that receiv'd the Seal or Mark of God in their Forehead : tho they were Men of all Nations, Kindreds and Languages, dispers'd abroad in the several Parts and Quarters of the World ; yet St. John beheld them in a Vision appearing before the Throne of God, and standing before the Lamb, clothed with the white Robes of Christ's Righteousness, and holding Palms of Victory and Triumph in their hands.

In this posture they began their Praises, crying with a loud Voice, and saying, *Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb.* Where they ascribe the Honour of their Deliverance to God the Father, by the Means and Merits of his Son ; saying with David, *Salvation belongeth unto the Lord, and his Blessing is upon his People.* And as it is his proper Work to save Men, so all the Praise and Glory of it is due only to God ; which they accordingly give and pay to him.

Next, He describes the Rejoicing in Heaven upon these occasions ; where he beheld *all the Angels standing about the Throne, and about the Elders, and the four Beasts, who all fell before the Throne on their faces, in token of Reverence to the Divine Majesty, whom they worshipped, saying, Amen : Assenting and joining together in the following words ; Blessing and Glory, and Wisdom and Thanksgiving, and Honour and Power, and Might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.* Where we have the Work and Business of the Saints and Angels in Heaven, who are continually employ'd in Doxologies and Hallelujahs, in celebrating the Glory, and singing the Praises of him that sitteth on the Throne, and of the Lamb for evermore : which Work, we as *Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and Members of the same Household and Family of God,* are to begin here on
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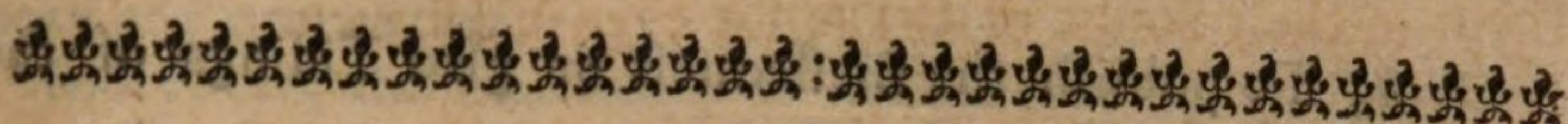
Earth, that we may be fitted to join and bear a part with them in their Songs of Praise for ever in Heaven.

This is the Sum of the Epistle for this Day, wherein we commemorate the Communion of Saints both Militant and Triumphant; having all the same God and Christ, the same Faith and Hope, and seal'd by the same Spirit. We are to remember the Saints on Earth, by praying for them, by sympathizing with them, and by affording our mutual Aid and Assistance to them in all the needful times of Trouble.

Moreover, We are to commemorate the Saints in Heaven, by praising God for them, by congratulating their Victories over all their ghostly Enemies, and rejoicing in their Happiness. But above all, we are to propound to our selves the Example of their Virtues for our Imitation, that we may resemble them in Grace here, that we may follow them to Glory hereafter; being meek and humble, constant and persevering as they were, that we may be happy and blessed as they now are.

To which end, Let us walk in the Light, as they are in the Light; abhorring all the Deeds of Darkness, and treading in the steps of their Holiness, that we may arrive at last to their Happiness: for *without Holiness no man can or shall see the Lord*. We must strive against Sin, which unfits us for the beatifical Vision, and live as the Saints of old did, to qualify us for those blessed Regions to which they are already arriv'd: so shall we with the departed Saints have our perfect Consummation and Bliss in his heavenly Kingdom; which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XXXVI.

The GOSPEL for *All-Saints* Day.

St. Matthew v. 1—12.

Jesus seeing the Multitudes, went up into a Mountain; and when he was set, his Disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven: Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted: Blessed are the Meek, for they shall inherit the Earth: Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled: Blessed are the Merciful, &c.

IN the Epistle for this Day, in which we commemorate all the Saints, we find God Almighty order'd a Seal or Mark to be set on his true and faithful Servants; partly to distinguish them from the un sanctify'd Herd of reprobate and wicked Men; and partly to preserve them from the Judgments and Miseries that befall others.

In this Gospel for the Day, our Saviour treats of the same or like Subject, marking out the Persons that are intitled to this Felicity. It begins with the Occasion, Time, and Place where he deliver'd these Instructions. The Occasion was his *seeing the Multitudes* flocking after him, and *his Disciples coming unto him*. The Place was a Mountain; *He went up into a Mountain*: that by the height of the place he might be the better heard and seen. The Time was upon the Entrance on his Prophetick Office, when he *open'd his mouth, and taught the People* the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Subject of his Discourse in the Gospel now read to us, is,

First, To publish the Blessedness or glad Tidings of the Gospel. And,

Secondly, To shew the Qualifications of the Persons to whom this Blessedness belongs. Both which will direct us in some measure how to become Saints here upon Earth, and to be number'd at last among the Saints in Heaven. For if we have the Seal of the Spirit stamp'd upon us, that is, the Graces of the Spirit after mention'd, planted in us; the Lord will know and reckon us to be his; as by the Sequel of this Discourse will more fully appear.

First then, what is the Blessedness here publish'd and proclaim'd by our Saviour? Why, that is far greater than we can express or conceive, and cannot be fully known till we come to enjoy it: for *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive, the great things that God hath laid up for them that love him. Now are we the Sons of God (saith St. John) but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; 1 John 3. 1, 2.* At present he hath adopted us into his Family, and made us his Children; but the Greatness of the Inheritance provided for us, is not yet fully reveal'd. St. Peter styles it *an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us; 1 Pet. 1. 4.* In the Enjoyment hereof, St. John tells us *we shall become like him, for we shall see him as he is.* Our weak Eyes are dazled here with the Brightness and Splendor of his Glory, but then we shall have such a transporting sight of him, as will transform us into the same Image from Glory to Glory.

The Holy Scriptures set forth the Blessedness of the Saints in this future State, by the highest and greatest things that our most rais'd Thoughts or Desires can reach or aspire to. For they represent it,

1st, Under the Metaphor of a *Kingdom*, and that not like the Kingdoms of the World, short, troublesom, and transitory; but a Kingdom in Heaven, that cannot be mov'd, or be taken from us.

Again, It is express'd sometimes by a *Crown*, not like earthly Crowns, that are beset more with Thorns than Jewels, and rather wound than adorn the Heads that wear them; but a *Crown of everlasting Glory, a Crown of Righteousness that fadeth not away, a Crown of Life* that knows
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no end or decay, to which no earthly Crowns or Scepters bear any proportion.

Moreover, the Excellency of this Blessedness is describ'd by a *Treasure*, not like earthly Treasures subject to the Corruption of the Moth and Rust, and liable to the Rapine of Thieves and Robbers; but *a Treasure in Heaven that faileth not, and endures for ever*: in comparison whereof, all worldly Treasures are but Toys or Trifles.

Lastly, to mention no more, the Blessedness of the Saints is set forth by a *Banquet* or *Feast* furnish'd with the most satisfying and never-failing Dainties, with Food that endures to eternal Life, attended with Fulness of Joy, and Rivers of Pleasure for evermore.

This, and infinitely more than we can ask or think, is the Blessedness here publish'd and promis'd by our Saviour to all his faithful Servants and Followers, of which the Saints in Heaven are already Partakers.

In a word, this Blessedness consists in a perfect Freedom from all Evil both of Sin and Suffering, and a compleat Fruition of all manner of Good, that our Natures are capable of receiving. So a Voice from Heaven describes the Happiness of departed Saints, *Rev. 14. 13. Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.* Where by the *Dead that die in the Lord* are meant either those that die in the Cause of the Lord, as all Martyrs and Confessors, or more generally all that die in the Faith and Fear of the Lord: whose Blessedness is describ'd to be partly privative, in resting from all the Labours and Pains, the Toils and Troubles of this World; and partly positive, in attaining to the Reward of their good Works, which will follow and crown them with everlasting Glory and Rest in the World to come.

But, *Secondly*, who are the Persons to whom this Blessedness belongs? or what are the Graces of the Spirit, that seal and secure this Happiness to them? Why, both those the following words will declare: And they are Poverty of Spirit, Mourning for Sin, Meekness in governing our Passions, Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, Mercifulness to the Miserable, Purity of Heart in all our Doings, Peacemakers in all Differences, and the Persecuted for Righteousness sake. To each of these Blessedness is here expressly assign'd and promis'd, together with the particular Part or

Portion of it that belongs to them; for the Persons in whom these Graces are found, are pronounc'd blessed: and must therefore be briefly consider'd.

1st, I begin then with the first Grace here mention'd, and that is Poverty of Spirit, with the Blessedness assign'd to the Persons in whom it is found, in those words, *Blessed are the poor in Spirit*. Now by this Poverty of Spirit we are not to understand such a Pusillanimity or Weakness of Spirit, as renders Men unwilling or unable to bear the Crosses and Hardships of this Life, and so causes them to sink under the Burden of worldly Troubles and Afflictions: for this is such a Meanness and Dastardliness of Spirit, as is inconsistent with the Duty and Courage of a good Christian. Both Christ and his Apostles forewarn'd us of Troubles, to arm us with Patience and Resolution to bear them: *In the World* (saith Christ) *ye shall have Tribulation, but be of good comfort, I have overcome the World*. He would have us use our Prudence, and to be *wise as Serpents*, to avoid all unnecessary Trouble; but withal to use our Patience, and be *harmless as Doves*, in bearing necessary and unavoidable Evils: And St. Paul wills all good Christians to be *strong in the Grace of our Lord Jesus*, and to *endure Hardship as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ*, 2 Tim. 2. 1, 3. So that such a Poor-ness or Weakness of Spirit, as faints or sinks under Tribulation, is not the Poverty of Spirit here meant: But by it we are to understand a Readiness of Mind or Spirit to bear Poverty, to part with all worldly Wealth at Christ's Call, as the Apostles did, and to be content to live poor and mean in this World, when our adhering to his Cause requires it; and so 'tis oppos'd to all Ambition or Affectation of earthly Greatness, and loving of Mammon more than God.

Briefly, This Poverty of Spirit consists chiefly in a humble and lowly Opinion of our selves, thinking our selves with *Jacob* to be *less than the least of God's Mercies*, and to deserve greater Evils than are laid upon us; with St. Paul reckoning our selves *the least of Saints, and the greatest of Sinners*: contrary to that spiritual Pride of the Church of *Laodicea*, who thought themselves *rich, increas'd in Goods, and to have need of nothing*; when they were all the while *poor and miserable, blind and naked*, lacking all things, Rev. 3. 17, 18. So that Humility and Lowliness of Mind is the Grace here meant by Poverty of Spirit; the being in our own Conceit the least, lowest, and meanest of God's Creatures,

tures, helpless as Babes and impotent as Children : which humble and child-like Temper is prescrib'd by Christ, as absolutely necessary to a good Christian, *Mat. 18. 4.* And he that is *least in his own eyes, shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven ; Luke 9. 48.*

And this will lead to the Blessedness here entail'd upon the poor in Spirit, *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven :* that is, the Kingdom of Grace here consists of such humble and lowly-minded Christians, who are the fittest to be receiv'd into the Christian Church ; *for God giveth Grace to the Humble.* And the Kingdom of Glory hereafter is prepar'd for those who abound in this Grace here : *for he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.* The way to rise highest in God's esteem, is to be lowest in our own ; and he that is least in his own eyes here on Earth, shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

This is the first Grace on which Blessedness is entail'd, to wit, Lowliness or Poverty of Spirit ; *Blessed are the poor in Spirit.* And indeed that is the Foundation or Seed-plot of all other Virtues, which thrive best, when most deeply rooted in Humility.

The 2d is Mourning for Sin, in those words ; *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* Where by Mourning is not meant the grieving or sorrowing for any worldly matters ; such as Losses or Crosses in our Estate, Indignities offer'd to our Person, Injustice to our Goods, Infamy to our Name, and the like : the grieving for these things is that *worldly Sorrow* mention'd by the Apostle, *2 Cor. 7. 10.* which when too much indulg'd or yielded to, *worketh Death.* But the Mourning here meant is a Contrition or Grief of Heart arising from a Sense of the Sins or Iniquities we have committed. This is that *godly Sorrow*, mention'd in the same Chapter, that *worketh Repentance unto Salvation, not to be repented of ; ver. 10.* call'd there likewise a sorrowing after a godly sort.

Now this Mourning is first and chiefly for our own Sins, whereby we have highly offended a gracious God, by violating the Authority of his Laws, and breaking through all the Obligations of his Love and Kindness. Next, we are to mourn for the Sins of others, especially if they be publick and national ; for they incense the Wrath of God, and pull down his Judgments upon us. Hence we find *David* first lamenting his own Sins of Murder and Adultery with bitter Tears of Sorrow and Repentance, *Psal. 51.*

and after tells us, how much he was *grieved for the Transgressors*, and that *Rivers of Tears ran down his Eyes, because they kept not God's Law*; Psal. 119. 136. The Prophet *Jeremy* wish'd his *Head were Water, and his Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that he might weep day and night for the Sins of the People*; Jer. 9. 1. And *Peter*, after the denying his Master, went out and *wept bitterly*. Now when we are thus deeply affected with Sorrow and Contrition for our own and others Transgressions, then are we reckon'd in the number of *Mourners*, who are here pronounc'd *blessed*; and that because *they shall be comforted*. Their Mourning shall be repair'd at present with inward Comfort, and their Sadness shall be rewarded with future and endless Joy. So *Lazarus was comforted*, when the rich Man *was tormented*. They that sow in Tears, shall reap in Joy; such as now go on their way weeping, and bear good Seed, shall doubtless come again with Joy, and bring their Sheaves with them. Psal. 126. 6, 7.

3dly, Another Grace to which Blessedness is promis'd, is Meekness; *Blessed are the Meek, for they shall inherit the Earth*. Where by Meekness we understand such a Mildness and Quietness of Spirit, as is free from all Pride, Passion or Prejudice, and whatever else is apt to disturb the publick or private Peace. 'Tis a Vertue that consists chiefly in the well ordering or governing our Passions, keeping them within due bounds, and not suffering them to run into Extravagance or Excess. So that Meekness makes us ever ready and willing to submit to God's Will in all things, without murmuring or complaining; to live in all due Obedience to Superiours, without any Stubbornness or Opposition; to live easily and quietly with Neighbours, without molesting or contending with them about Trifles or small Trespases; to bless and pray for Enemies, without studying any Revenge; to be loving and courteous to Friends: and in a word, to be humble, modest, and civil to all Men, doing none an ill turn, but ready to do any good Office to all; not breaking into causeless Anger, nor running into Rage or Fury with any, but being mild, gentle, and condescending to every one.

This is the Nature of Meekness, to which a Blessing is here assign'd; *Blessed are the Meek, for they shall inherit the Earth*. By inheriting the Earth, in the Old Testament, is meant Prosperity in the Land of *Canaan*; where long Life and a rich Portion of earthly Good Things was thought
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the greatest Blessedness. And if we observe the ordinary Course of Divine Providence, we shall find Prosperity and long Life to be ordinarily the meek Man's Portion. He feels a constant Calm in his Breast, when others are ruffled with the Storms of Anger, Pride, and Revenge. He finds a Blessing and Success in all his honest Enterprizes, when others meet with Disappointment and a Curse: for God's Delight is in the Humble and Meek, to bless and prosper them in all their ways; which is express'd here by *inheriting the Earth*, or enjoying with comfort that part of it which falls to their lot, as an Earnest or Pledg of a far better and never-fading Inheritance in Heaven.

4thly, Our Saviour pronounces them *blessed who do hunger and thirst after Righteousness*, with a Promise that *they shall be filled*. Where by Righteousness we are to understand both an inherent Righteousness, consisting in the sanctifying Graces of the Spirit planted in us, and the Seeds of a holy Life; and the imputed Righteousness of Christ accepted as ours, whereby we obtain Pardon of our Sins, and Acceptance of our Persons and Services.

To *hunger and thirst* after Righteousness, signifies an eager Appetite and Desire of both; longing for Grace as the spiritual Food and Nourishment of the Soul, and panting for Pardon as the Hart panteth after the Water-Brook, to refresh and comfort it.

They that do so are here call'd *blessed*, and that because *they shall be filled*. Their most eager Appetite after Grace shall be abundantly satisfy'd, and their most enlarg'd Desires for Mercy and Pardon shall be fully answer'd. Accordingly good Men find great Satisfaction in a Life of Grace here, and will find infinitely more in a Life of Glory hereafter. *Open thy Mouth wide* (saith God to the *Israelites*) *and I will fill it*, Psal. 81. 11. God is able to supply the Wants, and satisfy the largest Cravings of the Soul; which is more than the whole World and all things in it are able to do. For he that hungers after Wealth or Power, never finds he hath enough; and he that thirsts for the Honours and Pleasures of the World, is never satisfy'd with either: the Hunger and Thirst still increase upon him, the Desire ever out-runs the Enjoyment, and the more they have, the more they crave. But God hath all Fulness in himself, and can alone derive it to his Creatures; he is able to give more than we can ask or think, and so can fill up the utmost Cravings and Capacities of the Soul: which
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should make us all hunger and thirst after him and his Righteousness; and that will give us solid Peace and Satisfaction here, and everlasting Content and Happiness hereafter.

5thly, Another Grace on which Blessedness is entail'd, is that of Mercifulness; *Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy.* Now this Mercifulness is such a gracious Disposition of Soul, as inclines it to pity and shew mercy to the Needy and Distressed; and that consists chiefly in two things, to wit, in Giving and Forgiving.

That of Giving is the relieving the Wants of the Poor and Indigent, by feeding the Hungry, clothing the Naked, visiting the Sick, and doing all good Offices both to their Souls and Bodies.

That of Forgiving relates to the Injuries and wrongful Dealings of Men, and consists in passing by lesser Injuries and Indignities, without meditating Revenge or Reparation, and not suffering little Trespases to lessen or cool our Charity; but to be tenderly affected towards all Men both good and bad, and to be ever ready to shew mercy to the Miserable. These our Saviour here pronounces blessed, saying, *Blessed are the Merciful*; adding this Reason, *For they shall obtain Mercy.* There is Mercy in store for them that shew Mercy, but they shall have Judgment without Mercy, who shew no Mercy. The merciful Man is blessed partly in this Life, by the inward Delight and Pleasure that proceeds from well-doing, and the Likeness he hath to God in imitating his darling Attribute and Perfection of shewing Mercy; and partly in the World to come, when he shall be sure to obtain Mercy at God's hand, and be amply rewarded for all the Mercy and Goodness he hath shew'd here.

6thly, Another Grace to which Blessedness is annex'd, is Purity of Heart; saying, *Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God.* Where Purity of Heart signifies,

1. Sincerity and Singleness of Heart, in opposition to all Guile and Hypocrisy. As Wine is said to be pure when it is purg'd from the Lees, and Metals when refin'd from the Dross; so is the Heart said to be pure, when 'tis free from the base Ends and Alloys of Hypocrisy, and does all things with a clear and plain Simplicity. Again,

2. Purity in Heart is sometimes taken for a spotless Chastity and Cleanness of Mind, in opposition to Carnality and the Pollution of fleshly Lusts. As Water is said to be pure,

pure, when 'tis clear and unmixt, and free from Mud and Defilement, so a pure Heart is cleans'd from all sensual and carnal Impurities. This *David* pray'd for, *Psal. 51. Create in me a clean Heart, O God, &c.* And God Almighty call'd upon his own People to *wash their Hearts from Wickedness, that vain Thoughts might not lodg within them; Jer. 4. 14.* They that are thus pure in Heart, are pronounc'd blessed, because *they shall see God.* The Vision and Enjoyment of God is the highest Degree of Happiness that we can aspire or attain to; for that contains and includes in it all manner of Blessedness, that our Nature is capable of. Now none but the pure in Heart are capable of seeing God, for God is a Spirit, and cannot be seen by our carnal Eyes: our Mind must be purify'd, and in a manner spiritualiz'd for that Vision; for *without Holiness (saith the Apostle) no Man can see the Lord, Heb. 12. 14.*

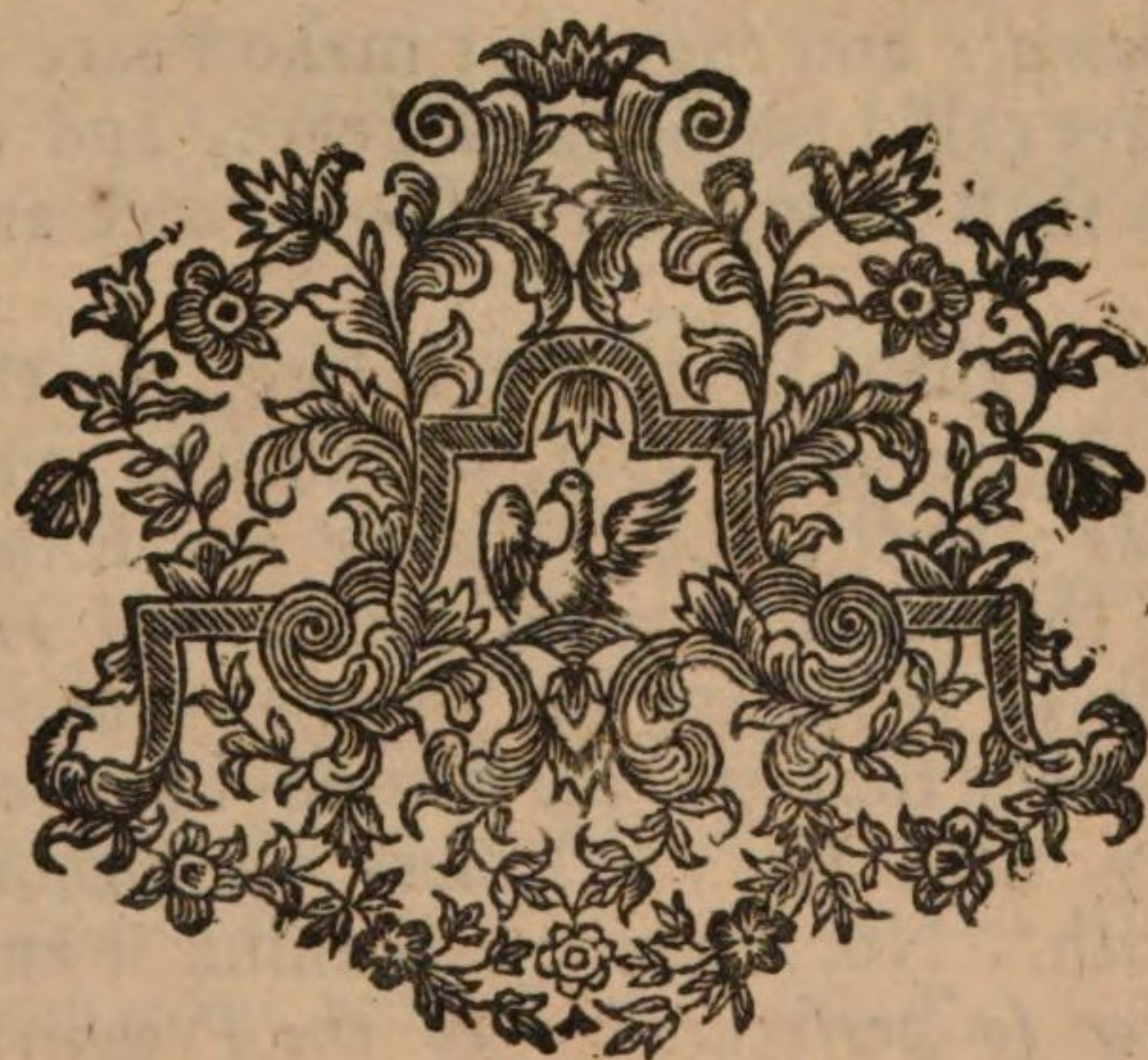
7thly, Peace-making is another Vertue, to which Blessedness is promis'd; saying, *Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be call'd the Children of God.* Where by Peace-making is meant Peaceable-mindedness, or a strong Inclination to promote the publick and private Peace of Kingdoms and Neighbourhoods; endeavouring by all prudent and possible ways to preserve it where it is, and to recover it where it is wanting. They that do so, are here *call'd the Children of God*: They resemble God in his Attributes of Charity and Goodness, as Children do their Parents in the Features of their Faces. God is stil'd the *God of Peace*, and sometimes the *Author of Peace, and the Lover of Concord*: and they that make Peace and reconcile Differences, are call'd the Sons of Peace, and the Children of God, who shall enjoy everlasting Peace and Rest with him.

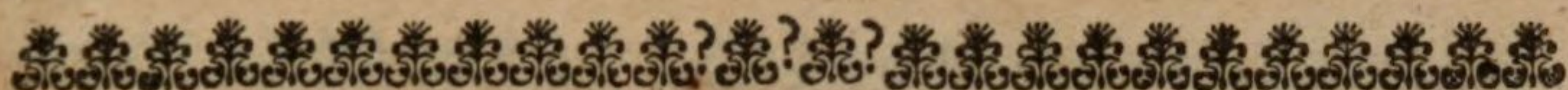
Lastly, The eighth Beatitude belongs to those that *are persecuted for Righteousness sake, and such as are revil'd falsely for Christ's sake*: to the one belongs *the Kingdom of Heaven*, and to the other *a great Reward in Heaven*. And therefore both of them are bid to *rejoice and be exceeding glad*; for whether they are persecuted by the Hand or the Tongue, they shall be no Losers by either, but great Gainers by both. Nor are they to think it any strange or new thing, for *so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you*; yea, Christ himself suffer'd this way, and was *made perfect by Sufferings*; for he endur'd the Cross and despis'd the Shame, before he receiv'd the Crown, and sat down

down at the right Hand of his Father. And all the glorify'd Saints and Martyrs, now in Heaven, tasted of the same Cup, and arriv'd to Heaven the same way.

Thus we see the Qualifications of the Persons to whom Blessedness belongs, or the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit whereby we are *sealed to the Day of Redemption*: which divine Graces let us all labour and pray for, to fit us for Glory, and to make us *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the Merits of Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, World without end. *Amen.*

The End of the Third Part of the Fourth Volume.





Two Practical

DISCOURSES:

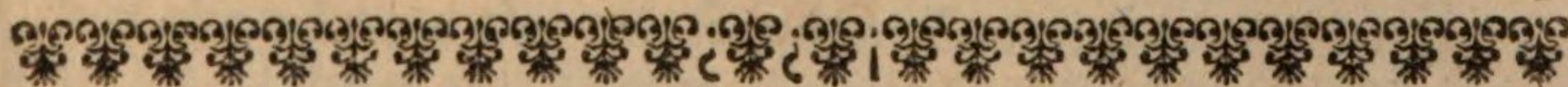
THE ONE

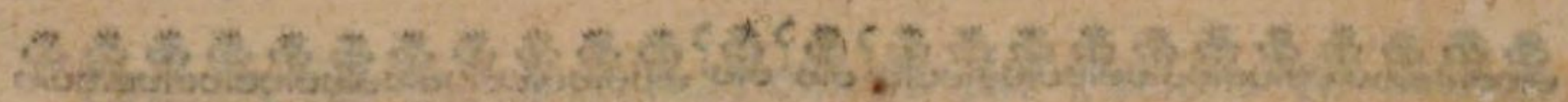
Exhorting to **C O N S T A N C Y** and
P E R S E V E R A N C E in the Christian
Faith.

THE OTHER

Encouraging to it by the **T R U T H** and
F A I T H F U L N E S S of Him who hath pro-
mised to preserve it.

1 Tim. I. 19. *Holding Faith and a good Conscience, which
some having put away, concerning Faith have made ship-
wreck.*





DISCOURSES
ON THE ONE



An EXHORTATION *to*
Constancy and Perseverance in
 the CHRISTIAN FAITH.

Hebrews x. 23.

*Let us hold fast the Profession of the Faith without
 wavering ; for he is faithful that promised.*



THESE Words are an Exhortation to Constancy and Perseverance in the Christian Faith: 'Twas directed first and chiefly to these converted *Hebrews*, who tho they had embrac'd the Christian Faith, yet were not wholly come off from an Opinion and Observance of the Legal Rites and Sacrifices ; and so were halting and wavering between the Law and the Gospel.

To remove this Instability, the Author of this Epistle endeavours to set them right in this matter ; and to that end, lets them know the transcendent Excellency of Christ, both in his Nature and Office, *above the Angels* ; and likewise his great Fidelity above that of *Moses*, the one being *faithful as a Son*, the other as a *Servant*. After which, he
 shews

shews the great Pre-eminence of Christ's Priesthood, who *was a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedeck*; above all the *Levitical Order of Priests*, which was but temporary, and after the Order of *Aaron*. And from thence infers, how much greater heed is to be given to the Words spoken by Christ, than by any other, either Angels or Men. Which things he proves at large in the foregoing Chapters.

In this Chapter, whereof our Text is a part, he shews how vastly Christ's Sacrifice of himself under the Gospel, exceeds all the Sacrifices under the Law; which were but so many Types and Shadows of his, and so were all compleated in him, and to cease at his Coming. Moreover,

The Legal Sacrifices consisting in the Blood of Bulls and Goats, had not value or virtue enough *to do away Sin*, or *to make the Comers thereunto perfect*; and by reason of their Imperfection were to be often repeated: but Christ, by one Offering of himself under the Gospel, hath made full Satisfaction for Sin, and *perfected for ever them that are sanctify'd*. And so there can be no need of repeating such an all-sufficient and meritorious Sacrifice: for whereas the High-Priest went once every Year into the Holy of Holies with the Blood of Expiation, Christ is *gone into Heaven once for all, there to appear in the presence of God for us*; by which he is able to *save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, since he ever liveth to make Intercession for them*.

From all which he exhorts, in the Verses before the Text, to come with boldness to the Throne of Grace, *by a new and living way consecrated through the Veil of Christ's Flesh*; and to draw nigh with a true Heart in full assurance of Faith. And that we may not be misled or drawn out of the way, he wills us, in the words of our Text, to *hold fast this Profession of the Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised*.

In which Words we have,

- I. A strict Charge to *hold fast the Profession of Faith without wavering*. And,
- II. A strong Reason to back and enforce it; because *he is faithful that promised*.

I begin with the first of these: In treating whereof, it will be requisite to shew,

First,

First, What we are to understand by *the Profession of the Faith*.

Secondly, What is meant by *holding it fast*. And,

Thirdly, What by holding it fast *without wavering*.

To which I shall add, what great reason we have to stick firm to it; together with the Manner and Means how we may be best enabled so to do. Of which particularly.

First then, What is this *Profession of Faith* which we are to hold fast? For the better clearing hereof, we must note that Faith is sometimes taken for the Act of Faith, by which we believe or assent to the Truth of any thing upon the Report or Testimony of another. And according to the different kinds of Testimony, there result different kinds of Faith: To believe upon the Witness of Men, is a Human Faith; and is that by which we govern our selves in the Affairs of this World: To believe upon the Witness of God, which is greater, is a Divine Faith; and is that by which we act in the greater Concerns of another Life. And such was his in the Gospel, who said, *Lord, I believe, help my Unbelief!* which relates chiefly to the Act of Believing; *Mat. 9. 24.*

Again, Faith is sometimes taken for the Object of Faith, or the Thing believ'd or assented to. And so 'tis understood in all those Scriptures, which speak of *preaching the Faith, contending for the Faith, holding the Faith*, and the like: which are principally meant of the Object of Faith, or thing believ'd, *viz.* the Doctrine of the Gospel deliver'd by Christ and his Apostles, and confirm'd by those unquestionable Miracles, that plainly prov'd it came from God.

By the Profession of this Faith is meant the owning, publishing, and declaring those Divine Truths thus reveal'd and confirm'd to us: for a Man may assent to the Truth of a thing in his own Mind, without publishing or declaring it to others. The one is that immanent and internal Act of the Soul, that is known only to God and our own Conscience; for none but *God can search the Secrets of the Heart, and who knoweth the things of a Man, but the Spirit of a Man that is in him?* The other is that external Act of the Tongue, whereby our Faith is made known unto Men: and this is that which is here stil'd *the Profession of Faith*.

Now both these are requir'd of us, and by the Apostle made necessary to Salvation, *Rom. 10. 8, 9, 10. The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth and in thy Heart ; that is, the Word of Faith which we preach, That if thou confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine Heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved : For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.* Where the outward Confession of the Mouth is join'd with the inward Confession of the Heart : and if we thus confess Christ before Men here on Earth, he will confess us before his Father which is in Heaven, *Mat. 10. 32.*

Now because these Divine Truths which we are to believe and confess, lie scatter'd up and down in Sacred Writ, so as not to be easily discern'd by vulgar Minds, nor distinguish'd from matters of lesser moment ; therefore they have been briefly compriz'd in that excellent Summary of the Christian Faith, known by the name of the Apostles Creed : so call'd, because (as most think) it was drawn up and fram'd by the Apostles as a Rule of Faith to be deliver'd and taught by them in all places where they came ; or, as others think, because it was gather'd out of the Apostles Writings, as consonant to, and containing the whole Substance of what they deliver'd.

But however that be, most certain it is, that the Church hath ever own'd and receiv'd it as the Apostles Creed, and hath exacted from all its Members an open Belief and Profession of it.

This is that *one Faith* mention'd by *St. Paul, Ephes. 4. 5.* and *the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints,* mention'd by *St. Jude, ver. 3.* To this the Apostles in their Writings frequently allude and refer. In the Epistle to the *Romans* it is call'd, *the Form of Doctrine deliver'd to them,* *Chap. 6. 17.* In another place 'tis stil'd, *the Analogy, that is, the Measure and Proportion of Faith ;* *Chap. 12. 6.* In the Epistle to *Timothy* 'tis call'd, *the Form of sound Words,* *2 Tim. 1. 13.* And elsewhere, *the Depositum or good thing committed to his charge,* *1 Tim. 6. 21.*

In this short Summary of the Christian Faith, we are taught what to believe of the Three Persons in the Blessed Trinity ; to wit, to ascribe our Creation to God the Father, our Redemption to God the Son, and our Sanctification to God the Holy Ghost. Adding our Faith in one Holy and Catholick Church : in which we believe one
Com-

Communion of Saints, bless'd with the Forgiveness of Sins here in this Life, and, after the Resurrection from the dead, with Life everlasting. This is briefly the Faith here refer'd to in our Text; which, because we solemnly confess in our Baptism, and daily rehearse in our Prayers, is here stil'd, *The Profession of Faith.*

Secondly, But what is it to *hold fast* this Profession of Faith? This we are often call'd upon to do: *Hold Faith and a good Conscience* (saith St. Paul to Timothy) *which some having put away, concerning the Faith have made shipwreck.* And elsewhere, *Hold fast the Form of sound Words which thou hast heard of me, in Faith and Love, which is in Christ Jesus; holding the Mystery of Faith in a pure Conscience:* 1 Tim. 3. 9.

Now the holding fast, in all those places, implies in it something Negative, and something Positive.

The Negative part is, not to depart or revolt from this Faith, nor at any time to deny or decline the owning of it before Men, when thereunto call'd.

The Positive part of it is, to stand firm and stedfast in the Belief of our Creed, and constantly to adhere to the Profession and Practice of what is requir'd in it.

1. I say, to hold fast the Profession of Faith, is not to depart or revolt from it; to be neither drawn away by the Smiles, nor deter'd from it by the Frowns of the World. We read of some who follow'd our Saviour for the Loaves, and kept with him, whilst any thing could be gotten by it; but when that fail'd, they utterly forsook and walk'd no more with him. The Allurements of Profit and Preferment have a mighty influence on the Minds of Men; and the Byass of Interest draws very strongly, which way soever it inclines. There are many that will stick to the Church in the Sunshine of Prosperity, when they can partake of its Endowments and Plenty; who yet can easily leave it in time of Adversity, when the Clouds gather and threaten; and *when Trouble and Tribulation arise because of the Word, by and by they are offended.* The Apostle speaks of some who *make shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience,* and cast away that in a Storm of Persecution, which they seem to admire and adhere to in calm and halcyon days. Such as these court Religion not for the Beauty, but the Dowry of it; and when that is gone, can see no Form or Comeliness in it, that it should be desir'd.

This is not to hold fast, but to let go the Faith, and betrays an evil Heart of Unbelief, that draws into Infidelity or Apostacy.

2. To hold fast the Profession of Faith, is never to deny or decline the owning of it, when thereunto call'd; nor shrink from it, for the fear or favour of any: but to be ready always (as St. Peter advises) to give an account of the Faith and Hope that is in you with Meekness and Fear; 1 Pet. 3. 15. That is, not to be backward to own and assert the Faith you profess, even before Governours, with that Meekness and Modesty that becometh the Disciples of Christ. This is to confess Christ before Men, to which he so far encourag'd his Disciples, that if they were at any time brought before Magistrates or Kings for his sake, they should take no thought how or what they should speak; for it should be given them in that hour what they should say: Mat. 10. 19.

And tho we may not always expect such extraordinary and supernatural Assistance in such cases, yet we may depend upon sufficient spiritual Aid to bear us up, and bring us off, on such Occasions.

And how suspicious soever we may be of our own Abilities, yet if we keep close to our Duty and the Cause of Christ, the Spirit of God will enable us to speak what is fit and proper to be spoken: and sure they that have God to enable and direct them, need not fear they shall want Answers and Assistance in the greatest Difficulties. For the Apostle assures us, that *his Grace shall be sufficient for us*, and that *he will not suffer us to be tempted or tried above that we are able, but will with the Temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it*; 1 Cor. 10. 13.

This is the Negative part or thing forbidden in the Text; to wit, not to desert the Faith by any Cowardice or Apostacy, nor to decline the asserting of it in times of greatest Danger and Difficulty.

The Positive part of it is, to continue firm and stedfast in the Belief of our Creed; and to persevere in the Practice of what is imply'd and injoin'd in it.

(1.) I say, to hold fast the Profession of Faith, is to stand firm and stedfast in the Belief of it. The first thing that Christ requires of his Disciples, is to believe in him, to be fully persuaded of the Divinity of his Person, and the Infallibility of his Doctrine; both which, the many Miracles and wonderful Works he did, may justly challenge
and

and exact from them : for as he spake as never Man spake, for the Excellency of his Doctrine ; so he confirm'd all by Works that never Man did, for the number and greatness of them : and by both seem'd not so much to beg, as to enforce our Assent to the Truth of all that he deliver'd. And that we might not be to seek what or how much to believe, he hath thorowly instructed us in all the necessary Points and Articles of Faith ; to which therefore we are to stand as firm and unshaken as a Rock : and having so full and compleat a Model of our Faith, we are to keep close to it, so as to believe all that is contain'd in it, and no more : for we may err as much in the Excess, by believing too much, as in the Defect, by believing too little ; as we may swerve from a Rule, as well by going beyond or beside it, as by coming too short of it.

Would any then tempt you to Atheism, by denying the Being and Providence of God ? Manfully withstand all such bold Assaults, by adhering to the first Article of your Creed, wherein you profess to believe one Almighty and Independent Being, who made all things by his Power, and still preserves them by his Providence ; and *take heed lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

Would any draw you into Deism, by denying the Lord that bought you, and calling in question the Deity of our Saviour, and the Efficacy of his Satisfaction ? Resolutely resist all such Attempts, by sticking close to the following Articles, wherein you profess to believe all that Christ did and suffer'd for Man's Redemption.

Again, Would any draw you from the one Communion of the Catholick Church, or seduce you into Schism and Separation from that sound part of it establish'd among you ? Be not carry'd away by such Delusions, nor run into Sects and Divisions under a pretence of Christian Liberty : but with the Primitive Christians *continue stedfast in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and Prayer.*

And as we may not come short of or diminish our Creed, by believing less ; so neither are we to add to or go beyond it, by believing more : so that if any would obtrude any new Doctrines upon us as Points of Faith, or impose new Austerities in point of Practice, we are not to receive but reject them ; and instead of accepting their Persons,

to account them accursed; *Gal. 1. 8, 9.* which is one main thing imply'd in *holding fast the Profession of Faith.*

(2.) The last, but none of the least things imply'd in it, is a constant Adherence to the Practice of those Duties and Vertues which the Profession of it obliges to, and requires of us: for the Christian Faith is not a mere notional Speculation, that rests only in the Brain to inform the Mind; but a practical Science, that influences the Heart, and guides the Conversation.

To believe in God, is not barely to entertain our Mind with a barren Notion of his Being, or to use our Reason in running up second Causes, till we arrive at the first Cause of all things, but to be a fruitful Principle of Virtue and good Works; to let us know our Dependence upon him, to honour his Holy Name and Word, and to serve him truly all the days of our Life.

To believe in Christ, is not merely to wear about an empty Name or Title of Christians; but to put our full Trust and Affiance in him, and to observe all the Laws and Precepts prescrib'd by him for the Conduct of our Actions.

The Belief of his Birth and Incarnation is design'd to teach us Humility and Condescension; his Sufferings, Patience; his Resurrection from the Dead, the Rising again to Newness of Life; his Ascension into Heaven, Heavenly-mindedness; and his Coming to Judgment, to put us in mind of preparing for it.

In a word, there is no Article of our Faith but instils into us some important Lesson, and exacts some necessary Duty from us; which, while we profess to believe, we tie our selves to the Obedience to, and Observance of it. So that to hold fast our Profession, is to keep our Creed whole and intire, to make it the Rule and Measure of our Faith, and to live in the Love and Practice of those Graces and Vertues that are comprehended in, and commanded by it: for we let go our Profession by falling into Heresies and Divisions on the one hand, or into Vices and Corruption of Manners on the other; and by both we are *carried away with the Error of the Wicked, and fall from our own Stedfastness.* In short then, to *keep the Faith,* is not only to believe aright, but to live suitably to it; to answer and adorn our Profession, and to stand firm upon the Basis of Truth and Righteousness. This is briefly *to hold fast the Profession of Faith.* But,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, What is it to hold it fast *without wavering*? Why, wavering we know is such an Instability and Unsettledness of Mind, as causes Men to fluctuate in Doubts and Uncertainties, and *like Children to be toss'd to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine*. 'Tis a Metaphor taken from the Waves of the Sea, which by the impetuous motion and stirring of the Waters, rage and swell, and are carry'd contrary ways by the variable Course and Violence of the Wind. *He that wavereth* (saith St. James) *is like a Wave of the Sea, driven with the Wind and tossed*, chap. 1. 6.

They that do so in Matters of Religion, are by the same Apostle stil'd, *Double-minded Men, that are unstable in all their Ways*, ver. 8. for having no stiddy Rule of Action, they vary and turn with the Wind and Tide of human Affairs; and moving only by the Wheels of Interest, they wind and wheel about as the World drives them. Of this sort are they that halt between two Opinions, being uncertain which to embrace or stick to. We read of some in the Old Testament, that halted between *God and Baal*; and of others in the New Testament, that waver'd between the *Law and the Gospel*. In our days there are some that halt between God and Mammon, and others that waver between the Church and the Conventicle: which things have begot that Giddiness and Instability in Religion, which is the great Misery and Malady of the present Age; wherein many have run from one Sect to another, till they have run themselves out of all Religion, and fallen at last into the Gulph of Atheism, from whence few return.

Wavering then denotes Uncertainty and Inconstancy; the one consists in doubting, the other in denying the Truth of the Gospel; and both lead to the Disbelief and Decay of all Religion: for he that is uncertain of the Way, will either lose or wander in it; and he that is faint and inconstant in it, will neither reach to the End, nor receive the Reward of it. So that to hold fast the Profession of Faith *without wavering*, is firmly to adhere to the Doctrine of Christ, and to be constant in the Profession and Practice of Christianity; not entertaining any Doubts, whether God's Ways or ours are best, nor leaving the Communion of the Catholick Church for the Conventicles of Sectaries, or dividing the one Body of Christ by Schisms and Separations from it; but with a stiddy and resolv'd Mind to stick

to the Rules of our Saviour, and the Truths deliver'd by him.

But why are we call'd upon thus to hold fast the Profession of Faith *without wavering*? Why,

1st, Because, as sad Experience shews, too many among us easily let it go and fall from it; and not only so, but seek to draw others into their pernicious and ungodly Ways. This is St. Jude's Argument for *contending earnestly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints*, because *there were certain Persons crept in unawares, who were of old ordained to Condemnation, ungodly Men turning the Grace of God into Lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*; ver. 3, 4. These were the Persons spoken of by St. Peter, who *privily brought in damnable Heresies, denying the Lord that bought them*, 2 Pet. 2. 1. And as he there foretold, that *many would follow their pernicious Ways*, so is it sadly verify'd in our Times; wherein many have revolted from the Faith, and fallen into dangerous Errors and Heresies; some saying with them in Job, *Depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledg of thy Ways*, Chap. 21. 14. others confessing him with their Mouth, but in their Deeds denying him: others again subverting the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and undermining many other Articles of the Christian Faith.

'Tis time then for us to look to our standing, when so many apostatize and fall away; to beware of all Stumbling-blocks that may lie in our way, and to watch against all the Occasions of falling; that we be neither drawn aside from the Faith by the Flatteries, nor driven from it by the Frowns of the World, but may remain firm and unshaken in the greatest Concussions. Steadiness in a Storm is the best way to weather and get out of it; whereas Wavering and Instability is the ready way to Shipwreck and Ruin. And this will lead me to a

2^d Argument for holding fast the Profession of Faith without wavering; and that is taken from the great Danger of Apostacy, or falling away from it. To depart from the Church, and the Faith profess'd in it, is to *deny Christ before Men*; and *them that do so, will Christ surely deny before his Father and the Holy Angels*, Mat. 10. 33. Luke 12. 9. Now Christ's denying them before his Father, is his disowning and rejecting them at the last Day, when he will say to them, *I know you not, depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity*: And what a dreadful Sound will that be in the Ears

Ears of such impenitent Sinners, to hear those heart-breaking Words from the mouth of our Saviour himself? when he, who alone can help, will disclaim all knowledg of them; and he, from whom all Hopes of Mercy can come, will bid them be gone for ever from his Presence. What unexpressible Horrour and Trembling must seize their guilty Souls, to hear that doleful Sentence of Condemnation pronounc'd against them, *Depart from me ye Cursed, &c.* where every word will be like a Dagger piercing the Heart, or like an Arrow striking thro the Reins? If *Peter's* short Denial of Christ cost him so many bitter Tears of Sorrow, when there was room left for Repentance, what Anguish and Bitterness of Soul must for ever possess such despairing Wretches, when there can be no hope or space for Amendment? Moreover,

Christ's *denying them before his Father and the Holy Angels*, will mightily increase the Shame and Terror of their Punishment. 'Tis some Allay to the Misery and Infamy of suffering, to perish unobserv'd; but to be made an eternal Spectacle of Folly and Misery before Angels and Men, cannot but extremely heighten the Sting and Horrour of Damnation: which is enough to deter us from disowning or denying of Christ for any Terrors or Temptations whatever.

3dly, As the Danger of deserting and denying of Christ is thus dreadful, so is the Benefit and Blessedness of believing and confessing of him no less great and unexpressible; for *he that confesseth me before Men* (saith Christ) *him will I confess before my Father which is in Heaven.* To keep the Profession of Faith without wavering, is to confess Christ before Men, the Reward whereof will be Christ's confessing all such before his Father in Heaven: for at the last and great Day of Judgment, he will step down from his Throne, and as it were taking them by the Hand, will present such Confessors to his Father, saying, Father, these have been my true and faithful Servants, that have own'd and stuck to me in the sharpest Trials; no Troubles or Tribulations from the World could draw them from me; no Bonds or Imprisonment, no, nor Death it self could make them deny me: I will therefore that these may be where I am, and that now a distinction be made between them that have continu'd with me, and them that have forsaken me, that the one may go into *Life everlasting*, and the other into *everlasting Punishment*. And now, O Father, glorify them

them in Heaven, who have glorify'd thee on Earth, that they who have suffer'd with and for me, may likewise reign with me, and behold the Glory which thou hast given me. And then ascending the Throne again, he will say unto them, *Come ye blessed Children of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepar'd for you from the Beginning of the World*; where every Word will mightily enhance the Joy, and add to their Happiness: For when the Wicked are bid to be gone, these are invited to *come* to him; and the *Curse* pronounc'd on the former, is turn'd into a *Blessing* to the latter; instead of the *everlasting Fire*, to which the Denyers of Christ are doom'd, the Confessors of him shall *receive an everlasting Kingdom*, which shall not be taken from them. And as the former was *prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, to whose wretched Company the Revolters from the Faith will be for ever sentenc'd; so was the latter *prepared of the Father before the Foundation of the World*, for all that firmly adhere to him, whose blessed Presence and Society they shall for ever enjoy in the highest Heavens; which is abundant Encouragement to *hold fast the Profession of Faith without wavering*.

But how may we be enabled so to do?

This is the last thing propounded to be spoken to; which being a Matter so well worthy to be known, I must crave a little more of your Patience, whilst I prescribe a few Directions and Motives to that purpose. And the

1st, And great Direction to this end, is frequent and fervent Prayer unto God for Grace to persevere in the Faith, and to be preserv'd from Apostacy. We cannot stand firm in it by our own Strength, but must be held up by a Divine Hand to be kept from falling; so St. Peter tells us, *We are kept by the Power of God thro Faith unto Salvation*, 1 Pet. 1. 5. We are daily beset with so many Enemies and Temptations from within and without, that we stand in continual need of God's Grace to be deliver'd from or supported under them. The Devil is ever busy to raise Doubts and Scruples in our Minds, to betray us into Infidelity. *Satan hath desir'd to have thee* (saith Christ to St. Peter) *that he may sift thee as Wheat, but I have pray'd for thee, that thy Faith fail not*; Luke 22. 31, 32. where Prayer is shew'd to be the best Preservative of our Faith against the Wiles of the Devil. The World too hath Charms of Pleasure and Profit to allure, and Storms of Persecution and Trouble

Trouble to affright us from the Truth ; and our own corrupt Hearts are too apt to join issue with them, and to yield us up to the power of their Temptations: so that 'tis absolutely necessary to implore the Succour and Assistance of Divine Grace, to help us in these Straits, and to carry us safe thro all these Difficulties. And to our unfeigned Prayers we are,

2dly, To add our best Endeavours to this purpose, not only by withstanding the Wiles of the Devil, but by watching against the Charms and Snares of the World, and the evil Suggestions of our own Hearts: We must labour to mortify all inordinate Love of worldly Interest, and to be at a holy Indifference about the things of this Life. This is indeed a hard Lesson, which yet must be learnt by all Christ's Disciples, who must deny themselves, to be kept from denying their Saviour: for *no Man can serve two Masters; the loving of the one will be the hating of the other, and the holding to one will be the despising of the other: ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* He that is immoderately addicted to earthly things, will easily break thro all Obligations to Religion and Vertue to attain his Ends, and leave his Saviour to compass his secular Designs. *Demas hath forsaken us* (saith St. Paul) *having loved this present World.* And therefore to keep steddy to the Faith, we must wean our Hearts from the World, which is apt to inveigle and draw too strongly from it.

3dly, To continue steadfast in the Faith, carefully avoid all unnecessary Disputes and vain Janglings about Sacred Matters; for those eat out the Substance of Religion, and destroy Charity, the Bond of Perfectness. 'Twas St. Paul's Advice to Timothy, that to keep the Faith, he should avoid all profane and vain Babblings and Oppositions of Science, falsely so called, which some professing, have erred concerning the Faith; 1 Tim. 6. 21. *Hymeneus and Philetus*, by giving heed to these things, came to deny the Resurrection; and the Scoffers derided Christ's coming to Judgment. And the unhappy Disputes of our Times have shaken the Faith of many, some calling in question the Authors, and others the Articles of the Creed; by which the Christian Faith is either maim'd or corrupted: which should teach us to forbear all striving about Words to no profit, but to the subverting of the Hearers.

Lastly, To preserve the Faith, labour to get and keep a good Conscience, and beware of allowing your self in the
Love

Love or Practice of any known Sin ; for that, if indulg'd, will not only weaken, but wear off the Impressions of Religion, and lead to the Sink of Atheism. A good Life is the best Prop and Security of our Faith : and when all is done, he is the best Champion and Assertor of the Truth, who squares his Life by the Rules of it. Faith and a good Conscience ever go together, and he that lets go the one, commonly makes shipwreck of the other ; for every known allow'd Sin makes a Party against the Faith : and Men generally fall into foul Errors, when they fall into Looseness and Corruption of Manners. Our Saviour tells us, *that he that doth the Will of his Father, he shall know the Truth.* God is willing to direct and keep those in the right, who are willing to know the way that they should go ; but he leaves those that forsake him, to fall and perish by their own Folly. Know then, my Brethren, that your true Interest lies on the side of Religion, the Practice whereof will keep you firm and tight to the Christian Faith ; otherwise 'twill be hard for you to preserve the Belief of that which makes against you : for as Men easily believe what they desire, so are they difficultly brought to believe that which 'tis their Interest to deny.

Upon the whole then, let me exhort you to the great Duty of the Text, to *hold fast the Profession of Faith without wavering* ; considering,

1st, That the Christian Faith is a Sacred Trust or Depositum committed to your Charge, and therefore ought to be carefully preserv'd. Every honest Man takes himself bound to discharge a Trust reposed in him, and faithfully to keep what is committed to his Care. Why, the Christian Faith is a Matter of Trust put into our hands, and by our professing it, we have taken the Charge of it ; and 'tis indeed the richest Jewel that Christ ever bestow'd on his Church. Let us then hold fast this Noble and Excellent Prize, and not tamely yield it up, or suffer it to be taken from us. O Timothy (saith St. Paul) *keep that which is committed to thy Trust !* meaning that Faith or Form of sound Words, wherein he had been instructed ; 1 Tim. 6. 20. 'Tis base and perfidious to betray a Trust, or embezzle Goods committed to our Custody : Let us not then truck away the Christian Faith for a little paltry Pelf, nor part with this Pearl of great Price for the gratifying a
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base Lust ; but let us preserve it with Diligence, and persevere in it to the end. To effect which, let us,

2dly, Call to mind the solemn Engagement made in our Baptism, to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, and as Christ's faithful Soldiers and Servants to continue steadfast in it to our Lives end ; Let us not then revolt from it, or turn Renegadoes to those Enemies we have solemnly renounc'd.

3dly, Let us consider the Firmness and Constancy of the Apostles and Primitive Christians to the Profession of their Faith ; that no Threats, Terrors or Tortures could make them deny or start from it : and let us tread in the steps of those our Forerunners in the Faith.

Lastly, To encourage us hereunto, let us often look up to the Glory to which they are arriv'd, and have an eye to the Recompence of Reward that will follow ; that so running with Patience the Race that is set before us, we may e'er long receive the glorious Prize set at the end of it : which God grant for the Merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



An



An ENCOURAGEMENT
to a Stedfast Adhering to the
 CHRISTIAN CHURCH, *and*
the FAITH Professed in it.

Hebrews x. 23. latter part.

For he is faithful that promised.



THESE Words are an Argument to back and enforce the foregoing Exhortation, to *hold fast the Profession of the Faith without wavering*, or warping from it. The Sense and Meaning whereof, together with Motives to encourage, and Directions to be enabled so to do, was the Subject of the preceding Discourse.

But because some may distrust the Soundness and Security of the Church, and others be discourag'd by the Difficulty of preserving the Faith profess'd in it, and the great Opposition made against both; the Apostle here minds us of the Power and Goodness of God, who hath promis'd to direct the one, and likewise of his Truth and Faithfulness, who hath engag'd to protect the other: both which
 are

are imply'd in these words, *He is faithful that promised.* Where we may observe,

First, Something suppos'd ; to wit, that God hath promis'd to preserve his Church, and the Christian Faith profess'd in it.

Secondly, Something express'd ; namely, that he is faithful that hath promis'd it, and is both able and willing to perform it.

Thirdly, Something to be infer'd from both ; to wit, that we may safely rely upon the Truth of his Promises, and depend upon him for the fulfilling of his Word.

First, I say, 'tis imply'd here, that God hath promis'd to preserve his Church, and the Christian Faith establish'd in it. If we consult the Book of God, and the History of former Times, we shall find many plain Promises to that purpose, with many Acts and Instances of the Divine Power and Providence to confirm them.

In the Old Testament we read of God's promising to *bless Abraham* the Father of the Faithful, and *all the Nations of the Earth in his Seed*, Gen. 12. The same Promise was renew'd to *Isaac and his Seed*, and likewise to *Jacob and his Sons*, who were the *Israelites*, whom God made choice of for his peculiar People ; taking them into Covenant with himself, and promising to be *their God*, and they to be *his People*.

This was then the Church of God, which he engag'd to preserve and protect from all their Enemies. And this he did, by delivering them first out of the Bondage of *Egypt*, and out of the hands of *Pharaoh* and his cruel Task-masters, by his own Almighty Arm.

After which, he bless'd them with Prosperity and Success in all their Undertakings : insomuch that when *Balak* hired *Balam* the Sorcerer to *curse* the People of *Israel*, he was forc'd to *bless them altogether* ; saying, *Surely there is no Enchantment against Jacob, nor any Divination against Israel ! And from this time it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, What hath God wrought ?* Numb. 23. 23.

The Prophet *Isaias* brings in God Almighty thus declaring of his Church, which he calls his Vineyard : *I the Lord will keep it, I will water it every moment ; lest any should hurt it, I will keep it night and day : Chap. 27. 3. And he that keepeth Israel (saith the Psalmist) will neither slumber nor*

nor sleep, but his watchful Eye will be still awake for their Security. In another place he tells us, that *no Weapon*, either of Power or Policy, *form'd against his Church, shall prosper*; and every Tongue that riseth up against it, *shall be condemn'd*: Chap. 54. 17. For *I* (saith the Lord) *will be a Wall of Fire round about it, and the Glory in the midst of it*; I will keep it under the shadow of my Wings, and no Evil shall approach to hurt it: *Zeck. 2. 5.*

These are some of the many Promises extant in the Old Testament, concerning God's great Care in establishing and preserving his Church; which was then confin'd to the *Jewish Nation* only, but is now extended to the uttermost parts of the Earth. Since which, we find,

In the New Testament, many rich and precious Promises to the same purpose; *viz.* That God will defend his Church against all its Enemies, and preserve the Faith profess'd in it from all that seek to destroy or undermine it; of which our Saviour's words to *St. Peter* is an eminent Instance: for when he made that famous Confession of his Faith in him, saying, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God*; our Saviour, after a high Commendation of his Faith, told him, that *upon this Confession of his, as upon a Rock, he would build his Church, and that the Gates of Hell should not prevail against it*; Mat. 16. 18. Where the *Gates* denote Power or Strength, which commonly lies in the Gates of a City, or the Arms or Weapons that were usually kept over them. By the *Gates of Hell* are meant the Powers of Death and of the Devil; for Hell in Scripture is sometimes taken for the Grave, and sometimes for the place of the Damned: the combin'd Forces of both which, shall never prevail so far, as to destroy the Church of Christ. The Gates of *Zion*, guarded by the Power and Providence of God, will be too strong for the Gates of Hell, fortify'd with all the Powers of Darkness; nor shall any Strength or Subtilty whatever root out the Faith which Christ himself hath planted. Satan indeed desir'd to have the *sifting* of *St. Peter*, that he might shake his Faith; but Christ pray'd for him, that *his Faith fail'd not*: and if we resist the Devil stedfast in the Faith, he must and will flee from us. To secure the Faith and Firmness of the Disciples, Christ promis'd to *be with them to the end of the World*, Mat. 28. 20. And if he be with and for us, who can be against us? Yea, farther to assure us of his Presence, he declares that he will never leave or forsake his Followers,

Followers, *Heb. 13. 5.* which made *St. Peter* ask the question, *Who shall harm you, if ye are Followers of that which is good?* For the Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of Temptation, and to reserve the Unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punish'd; *2 Pet. 2. 9.*

These are the principal Promises recorded in the New Testament for the Security of the Church; which we shall do well frequently to remember and ruminare upon.

But here we must note, that these Promises are not absolute, but conditional. There are some things to be done by the Members of the Church, to intitle them to the Blessings promis'd to it; and they are to keep God's Laws, to observe the Rules, and to live in obedience to the good Orders of the Church; without which, we cannot reasonably expect, nor shall ever obtain the Blessing.

The largest Promise of this kind that was ever made to any, was to *David* and his Seed; to whom God Almighty promis'd to establish his Throne for ever, that his Hand should hold him fast, and his Arm should strengthen him; that the Enemy should not be able to do him violence, nor the Wicked approach to hurt him; for he would smite down his Foes before his face, and plague them that hated him. These were all great and desirable Favours and Blessings. But yet some Conditions are added: *For if thy Children break my Laws, and walk not in my Statutes; if they forsake my Ways, and keep not my Commandments; I will visit their Iniquities with the Rod, and their Sin with Scourges.* And there cannot be a greater Scourge to any People, than to set a wicked Man to be Ruler over them.

In short, some Conditions must be perform'd on our part, to be made partakers of the promis'd Blessings; and we see they are, adhering to the Faith, and true Obedience. And if we do our part, we may rest assur'd, that God will not be wanting on his; for he hath engag'd his Truth and Faithfulness to make it good: Which is

The next thing to be spoken to; *He is faithful that hath promised.* God is not a Man that he should lye (said *Balaam*) nor the Son of Man that he should repent: Hath he said it, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? *Numb. 23.* Yes, he will not, yea, he cannot falsify his Word, nor suffer his Truth to fail. 'Tis easier for Heaven and Earth to pass away, than for one jot or tittle of his Word to fail or fall to the ground; *Luke*

16. 17. especially having back'd it with an Oath, for the greater Confirmation: *I have sworn by my Holiness* (saith God) *that I will not fail David*; call'd therefore the *sure Mercies of David*. And God willing (saith the Apostle) *more abundantly to shew unto the Heirs of Promise the Immutability of his Counsel, confirm'd it by an Oath*; that by two immutable things (*viz. his Word and his Oath*) wherein it was impossible for God to lye, they might have the greater Assurance and Consolation; Heb. 6. And this the Providence of God hath perform'd to his Church in all Ages; for he hath still watch'd over it for good, defeating the Plots and evil Designs of its Enemies, and delivering it in the greatest Extremities; as the Histories of all Times, and our own Experience can abundantly testify. For God is faithful that promised, and will not suffer us to be tried above our strength, but will with the Temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. 1 Cor. 10. 13.

'Tis true, God Almighty, for the Punishment of some, and for a Trial of the Patience and Constancy of others, suffers his People sometimes to lie under sore and heavy Persecutions. So did the *Israelites* under the Oppression and Tyranny of *Pharaoh*, and so did the Primitive Christians under the Rage and Fury of Heathen Emperors. Yet still God had a Church among them, which he preserv'd amidst the Flames and Fury of the hottest Persecutions. Such were the *Israelites* in *Egypt*, and the first Christians in the times of Heathen and Bloody Persecutors; who were both rescu'd from the Power and Malice of those that would have rooted them out.

Indeed, sometimes the Church may be brought to a low Ebb, when the Tide of Ungodliness flows very high; and in a corrupt and degenerate Age there may be but few sound Members left. So it happen'd in the days of the Old World, when the Church was circumscrib'd within the narrow Limits of *Noah's* Family, who were all saved in the Ark from perishing by Water, when the rest of the World were all swept away with a Deluge.

In some time after, the Wickedness of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* grew so great, and spread so wide among the Inhabitants of those Cities, that the Church seem'd to be restrain'd only to *Lot's* House, where but a few righteous Persons were left; who were saved in *Zoar* from perishing by Fire, when the rest of the Inhabitants were all consumed in the Flames. So that still God had some faithful Servants left;

left; of whom the Divine Providence took that care, as not to suffer them to be wholly lost.

In the days of *Ahab* and *Jezebel*, such havock was made of the Priests, and the People fell so fast into Idolatry, that *Elijah* thought the Servants of God were all either destroy'd or corrupted. But God let him know the contrary, saying, *Yet have I left me seven Thousand in Israel, whose Knees have not bow'd to Baal, and whose Mouths have not kiss'd him*; 1 Kings 19. 18.

In process of time, when the main Body of the Jews were rejected and cut off for their Unbelief; and so the Church, which was then confin'd to that People, in great danger to be lost; we are told that the Excision was not total, but that *a Remnant was saved*, Rom. 9. 27. And what was lost by the Infidelity of the Jews, was abundantly supply'd by the Accession and Conversion of the Gentiles. After which, the Church, that before was but like a Grain of Mustard-Seed, the least of all Seeds, by degrees grew into a large spreading Tree, where many might lodg in the Branches of it; and God Almighty so prun'd and water'd this Vine, which his own right Hand had planted, that it grew and increas'd exceedingly. Insomuch, that *all the Kingdoms of the Earth became the Kingdoms of Christ*; and the *Mountain of the House of the Lord was exalted above the Tops of the Mountains*. The Crowns and Scepters of Princes veil'd to the Banner of the Cross, and Christianity spred and prevail'd over the face of the Earth.

Yea, we read that the Church increas'd and multiply'd by those Sufferings that were design'd to diminish and destroy it; and like the Palm-Tree rose and flourish'd the more, by the Endeavours that were us'd to suppress it. 'Tis said of the *Israelites* in *Egypt*, that *the more they were afflicted, the more they multiply'd and grew*, Exod. 1. 12. And the Blood of the Martyrs hath since prov'd the Seed of the Church; which, wherever it hath been sown, hath ever produc'd a plentiful Harvest.

But was not the Destruction of the seven Churches of *Asia*, whom God for their Lukewarmness and Hypocrisy spew'd out of his Mouth, and are left as Monuments of Divine Vengeance ever since, a sad Instance of the Ruin and Failure of the Christian Church? Yes, of some particular, but not of the universal Church: for tho those seven Churches were for their Ingratitude and Barrenness in good Works, justly depriv'd of the Light of the Gospel,

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and remain still overspread with Darkness and Barbarism; yet was not the Light of it put out, but only transfer'd to another People, among whom it shin'd the brighter: tho the Candlestick was remov'd, yet the Light was not wholly extinguish'd, but what was wanting in one place, was made up with advantage in another. So that God hath always had some true and faithful Servants, that have stuck to him in the worst of Times. And 'tis not to be doubted, but that even in our corrupt and degenerate Age, wherein Atheism, Schism and Infidelity so unhappily abound, there are many thousand Souls, who firmly adhere to the Christian Church, and the one Faith and Communion profess'd and settled in it, and resolve to continue so to do to their Lives end. And some such there always will be to the end of the World, whom God hath promis'd so to preserve, that neither the Subtilty nor the Cruelty of all their Adversaries shall be ever able utterly to destroy or root out.

By which it appears, that *he is faithful that hath promised*, having ever fulfill'd his Word, and never suffer'd his Truth to fail. And therefore,

Thirdly, We may safely rely upon him for the Continuance of his Church, and the Faith profess'd in it; for he is abundantly able and willing to protect and preserve both.

As for his Ability, he that hath all Power in Heaven and Earth, and to whom nothing is impossible, cannot want Power to perform his Promise, none having any Might or Wisdom without or against him.

As for his Willingness: He that is abundant in Goodness and Truth, and whose Mercies are over all his Works, cannot want a Will to extend it to his own Church and People, especially having pawn'd his Faithfulness so to do. Upon both which accounts, we may very well repose our full Trust and Confidence in him, and depend upon the Divine Providence for the Stability of his Church, and the Success of our Faith in him: Of which we may be fully assured,

1st, From the near Relation which Christ beareth to his Church, which he sometimes styles, *his own Body*; and for that we may be sure he must have a particular Kindness, and will take a more especial Care. Again, he calls it sometimes *his Spouse*, and *his dearly Beloved*; which endearing Relations have made him so tender of their Welfare,

fare, that he that touches them, touches the Apple of his Eye; Zech. 2. 8.

2dly, The Price that Christ gave for his Church, which he purchased with his own Blood, Acts 20. 28. will not suffer it to be lost. *We were not redeemed (saith St. Peter) with such corruptible things as Silver, but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without Blemish, and without Spot; 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19.* Now he that paid so dear for his Church, will not let it run to Ruin or Decay; nor shall the Faith, upon which it is founded, ever fall to the ground: No, *The Foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this Seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; 2 Tim. 2. 19.*

3dly, The Covenant that God enter'd into with us, whereby he hath engag'd to be our God, and we to be his People, may give us full Assurance of his Care and Protection. Hence *Zachary* puts us in mind of God's performing the Promise made to our Forefathers, and remembering his Holy Covenant, Luke 1. 72. And the Blessed Virgin acknowledgeth, that he remembering his Mercy hath halpen his Servant Israel, as he promised to our Forefathers, Abraham and his Seed for ever; ver. 54, 55. From whence we may still conclude, that he who hath been ever mindful of his Covenant, will never be forgetful of his Church.

To all which if we add the Consideration, how much the Honour and Glory of God is concern'd in the Preservation of his Church; we may safely depend upon it, that neither the Bars of the Grave, nor the Gates of Hell shall ever prevail against it.

Thus we see the Firmness and Fidelity of God's Promises, together with the Safety and Stability of the Church, and the Christian Faith, upon which it is founded.

From all which we may, by way of Application, infer these few Corollaries: As,

First, We may learn hence the extreme Folly and Madness of plotting and conspiring against the Church of Christ; for God Almighty having taken it into his Care and Protection, to attempt against it, is to fight against God, and to be confederate against him; which none ever did and prosper'd, as we may see in the Murmurings of the People against *Moses* and *Aaron*, Numb. 16.

The Church indeed hath ever had many subtle and malicious Enemies, that desir'd and design'd its Ruin. The

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Psalmist speaks of some in his time, *who bore an evil will at Zion*; and of others that said of *Jerusalem, Down with it, down with it, even to the ground*, Psal. 137. 7. *Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, the Philistines also with them that dwelt at Tyre, all conspir'd against it, saying, Come, and let us root them out, that they be no more a People, and that the Name of Israel be no more in remembrance*; Psal. 83. Yea, we read that *the Kings of the Earth stood up, and the Rulers took Counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed*; Psal. 2. 2, 3. But what was the Issue of all this? Why, the Psalmist tells us, *They did but imagine a vain thing; and form'd a mischievous Device, which they were not able to perform: for he that sitteth in the Heavens laughed them to Scorn, and the Most High had them in derision; saying, Yet have I set my King upon my Holy Hill of Zion: Ver. 1, 4, 5, 6. & Psal. 21. 11.*

Neither doth this Enmity and Opposition against the Church yet cease, some reviling, and others secretly studying to undermine it. And as *Herod and Pontius Pilate*, tho at variance with one another, did yet agree together against our Saviour; so all Sects and Factions, Presbyterians, Quakers and Anabaptists, tho differing among themselves, are yet confederate together against the Church as the common Enemy; the Atheist also is join'd with them, the Deist with the Sons of *Belial* and Children of Disobedience, all conspire together to compass its Destruction.

But Thanks be to God, whose watchful Providence is ever ready to protect and defend it, to blast all the Designs laid against it, and to deliver it from the Malice and Machinations of all its Adversaries: And may it still continue to do so to the World's end!

Secondly, This Discourse may serve to comfort all the dejected or distressed Members of the Church, who wish well to *Zion*, and lament the Decays and Ruins of *Jerusalem*; for tho the Walls may be shaken, yet the Foundation of it standeth sure, The Lord knoweth and will preserve those that are his.

Indeed God may and sometimes doth use the Wicked as his Rod, to correct the Faults and Miscarriages of his own Children; but he will not take away his Loving-Kindness from them, nor suffer his Truth to fail: He hath undertaken their Defence, and none shall be able to pluck them out of his hands; for if the Powers of Hell cannot prevail, we need not fear what earthly Powers can do against them:

them: which is enough to bear us up with Comfort under all the Crosses and Calamities of this Life; for *tho many are the Troubles of the Righteous, yet God hath promis'd to deliver them out of all.* And faithful is he that promised.

Lastly, From what hath been said, we may learn to bless God for taking so great care of his Church: And to rely upon the Security and Protection of his Almighty and Outstretched Arm, never betaking our selves to any sinister or indirect Courses for our own Safety, but committing our selves and our Cause to him in well-doing, who will surely stand by and deliver us in all the needful times of Trouble.

Let us then firmly adhere to the Catholick Church, and never warp or waver from the Catholick Faith establish'd and profess'd in it.

More particularly; Let us stick close to that sound part of it that is establish'd among us: A Church truly Antient and Apostolical, whose Doctrine, Discipline and Devotion are all fram'd by the first pure and primitive Pattern; and since refin'd from the Dregs of Superstition, and the Dross of Enthusiasm. By living in the Communion of it here on Earth, we shall be fitted to live in the Communion of Saints for ever in Heaven. Let us therefore be true to it without Doubting and Hypocrisy, and persevere in it to the end without Defection or Apostacy; so shall it be safe from the Gates of Hell, and strong as the Gates of Heaven; thro which an Entrance shall be administred abundantly into the Kingdom of God, to all that adhere to and put their Trust in him. In a word, *My Brethren, be ye stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord:* which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen,*

F I N I S.



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Kingdom of God, to all that adhere to and put their Trust
in it. Thus word, My Brethren, keep fast, keep firm, in
the Faith of the Lord, for the Lord is with you, and he will
be with you ever, for he will be with you in the Lord.
Which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, Amen.



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